

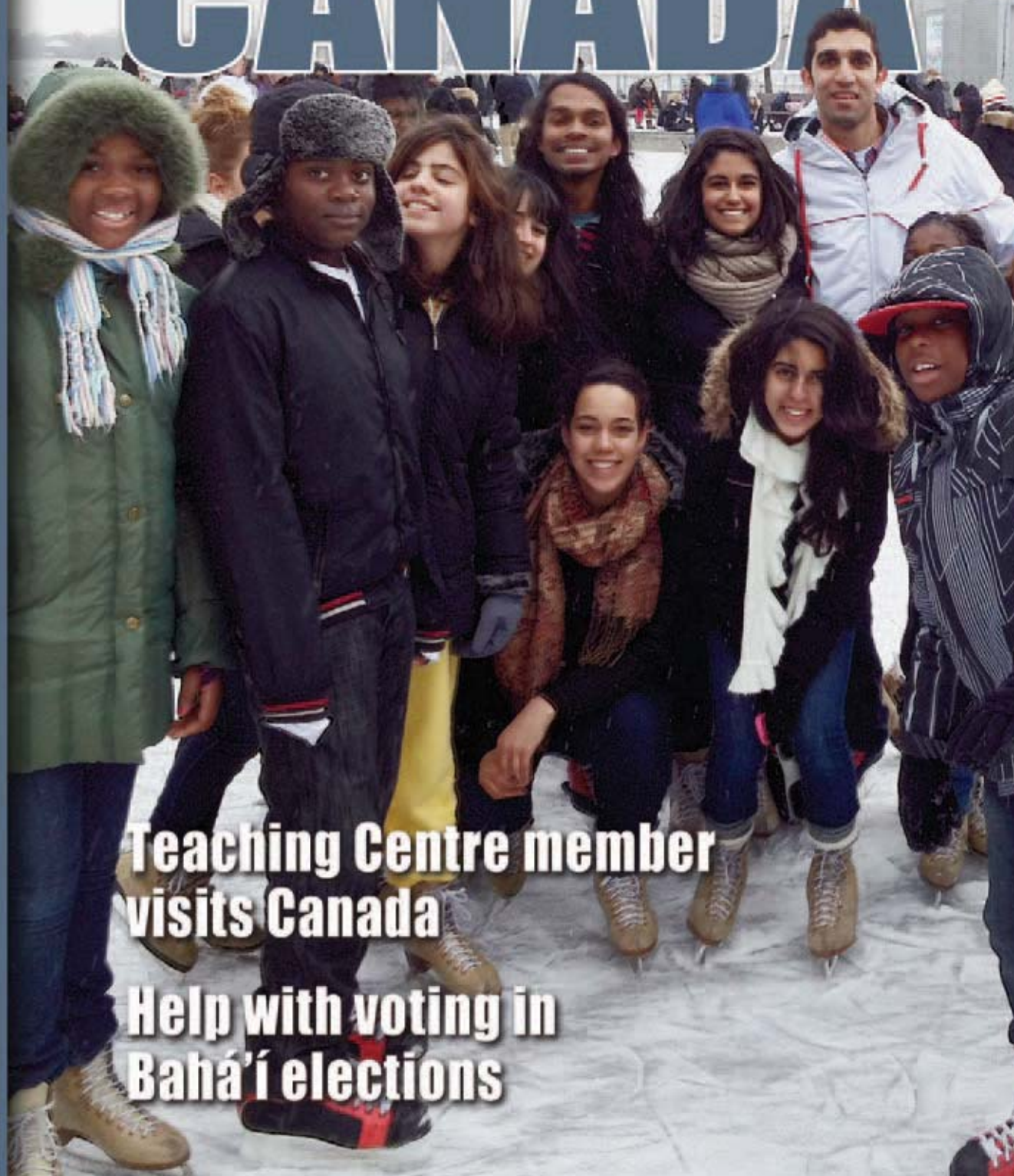
'Abdu'l-Bahá's
Travels
- Part 5

BAHÁ'Í CANADA

MARCH/APRIL 2012 • BEAUTY 169 B.E.

VOL. 24, No. 6

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**Teaching Centre member
visits Canada**

**Help with voting in
Bahá'í elections**

From the Writings

God grant that, in these days of heavenly delight, ye may not deprive yourselves of the sweet savors of the All-Glorious God, and may partake, in this spiritual Springtime, of the outpourings of His grace. Arise in the name of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge, and, with absolute detachment from the learning of men, lift up your voices and proclaim His Cause. I swear by the Day Star of Divine Revelation! The very moment ye arise, ye will witness how a flood of Divine knowledge will gush out of your hearts, and will behold the wonders of His heavenly wisdom manifested in all their glory before you. Were ye to taste of the sweetness of the sayings of the All-Merciful, ye would unhesitatingly forsake your selves, and would lay down your lives for the Well-Beloved.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 84)

Friends! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you. The Day Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty, nor failed to recognize the beauty of his Best-Beloved in this, His new attire. Watch over yourselves, for the Evil One is lying in wait, ready to entrap you. Gird yourselves against his wicked devices, and, led by the light of the name of the All-Seeing God, make your escape from the darkness that surroundeth you. Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. The Evil One is he that hindereth the rise and obstructeth the spiritual progress of the children of men.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 94)

Man is like unto a tree. If he be adorned with fruit, he hath been and will ever be worthy of praise and commendation. Otherwise a fruitless tree is but fit for fire. The fruits of the human tree are exquisite, highly desired and dearly cherished. Among them are upright character, virtuous deeds and a goodly utterance. The springtime for earthly trees occurreth once every year, while the one for human trees appeareth in the Days of God – exalted be His glory. Were the trees of men's lives to be adorned in this divine Springtime with the fruits that have been mentioned, the effulgence of the light of Justice would, of a certainty, illumine all the dwellers of the earth and everyone would abide in tranquillity and contentment beneath the sheltering shadow of Him Who is the Object of all mankind. The Water for these trees is the living water of the sacred Words uttered by the Beloved of the world. In one instant are such trees planted and in the next their branches shall, through the outpourings of the showers of divine mercy, have reached the skies. A dried-up tree, however, hath never been nor will be worthy of any mention. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 257)

Every thing must needs have an origin and every building a builder. Verily, the Word of God is the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world – a world which is adorned with the splendours of the Ancient of Days, yet is being renewed and regenerated at all times. Immeasurably exalted is the God of Wisdom Who hath raised this sublime structure. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 141)

Persevere in the use of the Obligatory Prayer and early morning supplications, so that day by day thine awareness may increase, and, through the power of the knowledge of God, thou mayest rend asunder the veil of error of the people of doubt and lead them to His unfailing guidance. In every assembly, like unto a candle, thou shouldst give forth the light of Divine knowledge.

(Abdu'l-Bahá, *Compilations, The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*)

My brother! How great, how very great, can the law of obligatory prayer be, when, through His mercy and loving kindness, one is enabled to observe it. When a man commenceth the recitation of the Obligatory Prayer, he should see himself severed from all created things and regard himself as utter nothingness before the will and purpose of God, in such wise that he seeth naught but Him in the world of being. This is the station of God's well-favored ones and those who are wholly devoted to Him. Should one perform the Obligatory Prayer in this manner, he will be accounted by God and the Concourse on high among those who have truly offered the prayer. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilations, The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*)

Of the new Obligatory Prayers that were later revealed, the long Obligatory Prayer should be said at those times when one feeleth himself in a prayerful mood. In truth, it hath been revealed in such wise that if it be recited to a rock, that rock would stir and speak forth; and if it be recited to a mountain, that mountain would move and flow. Well is it with the one who reciteth it and fulfilleth God's precepts. Whichever prayer is read will suffice. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Compilations, The Importance of Obligatory Prayer and Fasting*)

April 2012

Beauty 169 B.E.

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Published for the Bahá'ís of Canada

ON THE COVER



Participants in the junior youth coordinator training from across Canada and the U.S. and the Toronto, Ont. junior youth camp go skating together in late December.

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UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

The Mother Temple of South America

From the Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 16 February 2012:

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

With joy we announce several major developments in connection with the emergence of the Mother Temple of South America. Two weeks ago the contract for the construction of the foundation of the building and all concrete work was awarded to a reputable firm in Chile. Following the completion of the excavation and grading for the foundation and plaza, work has now begun on the basement, service tunnel, main floor and mezzanine structure, incorporating important features for seismic resistance based on extensive computational modelling and analysis. And today, after several months of evaluation and assessment of alternative bids, the contract for the fabrication and erection of the Temple's complex steel superstructure was signed with a well-known

German company. The skeletal framework will stand 30 metres high and support 500 tonnes of exterior and interior cladding of translucent cast glass and carved stone. The nine linked sections of the metal structure will be bound together through an intricate anchorage system that will ensure the connections will not detract from the sublime aesthetic effect of the completed design.

May the followers of the Blessed Beauty throughout the world draw inspiration from these recent developments as they exert themselves – sacrificially, generously, unitedly – to contribute to the advancement of the Cause by word and deed.

The Universal House of Justice

The passing of Anneliese Bopp

From the Universal House of Justice to All National Spiritual Assemblies, 21 February 2012:

We are deeply saddened at the passing of dearly loved Anneliese Bopp, tireless promoter of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. Born to a family closely connected with the earliest stirrings of the Cause in Germany, she was a steadfast handmaiden of the Blessed Beauty whose efforts over so many years did much to advance His Faith on the European continent. Among her innumerable contributions was an intimate involvement in the construction of the Mother Temple in Europe, completed while she served as Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany.

In 1970 she was appointed to the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe; nine years later she was called to serve as a Counsellor member of the International Teaching Centre, in which capacity she

laboured, until 1988, with exemplary devotion. Even in her life's twilight, Anneliese attentively followed developments in the Faith and vital matters pertaining to the progress of humankind. We remember with profound admiration her indomitable spirit, her clarity of thought, her disarming candour; we grieve the loss of one of the Faith's champions.

To her family, and to all who loved her, we extend our sympathy, assuring them of our heartfelt prayers in the Holy Shrines for her soul's joyful passage into the eternal realms. We advise the holding of befitting memorial gatherings in her honour by the friends everywhere, including in all Houses of Worship.

The Universal House of Justice

Prayers for the people of Iran

Message from the Department of the Secretariat of the Universal House of Justice, to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 2 March 2012:

As the Bahá'ís worldwide now enter the month of the Fast, these days of 'bounty and tranquillity,' each hour of which is endowed with incalculable blessings, the Universal House of Justice has directed us to call upon you to invite the Bahá'ís throughout your nation to offer prayers during this month for the protection of their

cherished brothers and sisters in the Cradle of the Faith and on behalf of all other citizens in that sacred land, beseeching Bahá'u'lláh for their well-being. In the midst of their dire tribulations, which have recently intensified, your solidarity in spirit will assuredly bring consolation to their hearts.



To the Bahá'ís of Canada gathered at Unit Conventions

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

It is with warmest love that the National Spiritual Assembly greets you, as you gather to elect your delegates to this year's National Convention and consult together. This year the Assembly raised up by your efforts will be called on, in turn, to elect the Universal House of Justice, providing a precious and direct link from your participation in the unit election to that Institution whose guidance is shaping and moulding a new world civilization.

As the National Assembly reflected on the most pressing matters to place before you today, we had just studied the 12 December 2011 message of the Universal House of Justice. In it, the House of Justice describes the organizing principle of the institute process – “developing capacity to serve the Cause and humanity in a process likened to walking a path of service” – and explores the concept of a path on which one walks in the company of others. Following comments about the institute curriculum and structure, the letter ends with a particular summons, addressing the hope and trust of our future: “In the young people of the world, then, lies a reservoir of capacity to transform society waiting to be tapped. And the release of this capacity should be regarded by every institute as a sacred charge.” Exploring the conditions in which this “sacred charge” can be addressed, then, is the theme we ask you to consider today.

In the second paragraph of the letter, the House of Justice points out that “What has been especially heartening to observe in this respect is the widespread mobilization of resources dedicated to the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme.” In Canada, the Counsellors and National Assembly have rejoiced to see how the growing strength of the junior youth program in clusters across the country has contributed to the overall strength and development of the clusters themselves. Particular tribute must be paid to the dazzling record of achievements of Canada's youth as they have arisen with consecration, enthusiasm and excellence in tireless service to the children and junior youth of this country.

An animator of a junior youth group, when asked what brought him the most joy as he watched his group advance, quietly reflected and then answered that it was watching the seriousness and pleasure

with which the participants in his group served the needs of the children. Seeing lethargy shed and powers divinely designed for the nurturing of the young ones released – this is surely one of the striking confirmations of this series of Plans. In stark contrast to a culture so afflicted by apathy, the world that Bahá'ís and those who are working at their side are building is one of fierce commitment, caring, action, and movement. Freed from the pull of a world that concentrates on self and ego, this youthful population rises to new heights of service, empowered to fulfil their part in the transformation of civilization on this planet.

We all have a keen interest in this special stage of life, whether we are directly engaged with children's classes and junior youth groups or encouraging younger generations as fellow members of the community. This shared responsibility calls for careful reflection on how to create the necessary space for their emerging capacities to be channelled into action.

The National Assembly places the following questions and the passages below from letters of the House of Justice before you to stimulate, but not restrict, your reflections which will in turn assist your delegates as they prepare for consultation at the National Convention.

- How can individuals and families, communities and institutions support the work of the institute to release the reservoir of capacity latent in its “sacred charge” – the young people of the world?
- What habits of thought about these children, junior youth and youth are prevalent in our cultures and need to be transformed? How can an awareness of their social reality be raised and inform our service to them?
- What is needed to support young people as they arise to devote a few years of their lives to the provision of spiritual education to the rising generations?

Let us cast our vision forward to the end of the Plan, while looking back to this potent period of remembrance of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to the West. What might we see? Might we not be filled with wonder at the transforming effect of the service of children to their communities, junior youth whose



NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

voices have been strengthened, and youth who have been empowered as agents of social change? Might we not also reflect on what 'Abdu'l-Bahá has become to them, that however much His tender gaze has always been fixed on the world's young ones, this was indeed the time when to thousands upon thousands in Canada He became a conscious refuge,

their tongues singing His praise, their prayers seeking His assistance, their deeds inspired by His life? Be assured of our love and gratitude as you bend your thoughts to how this may be achieved.

National Spiritual Assembly
of the Bahá'ís of Canada

Appendix to the Unit Convention message

The main sequence of courses is organized so as to set the individual, whether Bahá'í or not, on a path being defined by the accumulating experience of the community in its endeavour to open before humanity the vision of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order. The very notion of a path is, itself, indicative of the nature and purpose of the courses, for a path invites participation, it beckons to new horizons, it demands effort and movement, it accommodates different paces and strides, it is structured and defined. A path can be experienced and known, not only by one or two but by scores upon scores; it belongs to the community. To walk a path is a concept equally expressive. It requires of

the individual volition and choice; it calls for a set of skills and abilities but also elicits certain qualities and attitudes; it necessitates a logical progression but admits, when needed, related lines of exploration; it may seem easy at the outset but becomes more challenging further along. And crucially, one walks the path in the company of others.

(Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 12 December 2011)

The rapid spread of the programme for the spiritual empowerment of junior youth is yet another expression of cultural advance in the Bahá'í community. While global trends project an image of this age group as problematic, lost in the throes of tumultuous physical and emotional change,



The Seat of the Universal House of Justice, and entrance to the Centre for the Study of the Texts in foreground. Photo: Bahá'í International Community



NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

unresponsive and self-consumed, the Bahá'í community – in the language it employs and the approaches it adopts – is moving decidedly in the opposite direction, seeing in junior youth instead altruism, an acute sense of justice, eagerness to learn about the universe and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world. Account after account, in which junior youth in countries all over the planet give voice to their thoughts as participants in the programme, testifies to the validity of this vision. There is every indication that the programme engages their expanding consciousness in an exploration of reality that helps them to analyze the constructive and destructive forces operating in society and to recognize the influence these forces exert on their thoughts and actions, sharpening their spiritual perception, enhancing their powers of expression and reinforcing moral structures that will serve them throughout their lives. At an age when burgeoning intellectual, spiritual and physical powers become accessible to them, they are being given the tools needed to combat the forces that would rob them of their true identity as noble beings and to work for the common good.

(Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Ridván 2010)

We need not provide for you here evidence of the influence that such a deficient code now exerts on humanity as a whole; even the remotest spots on the globe are captivated by its enticements.

Yet we feel compelled to mention a few points related specifically to the theme of purity. The forces at work on the hearts and minds of the young, to whom the Guardian directed his appeal most fervently, are pernicious indeed. Exhortations to remain pure and chaste will only succeed to a limited degree in helping them to resist these forces. What needs to be appreciated in this respect is the extent to which young minds are affected by the choices parents make for their own lives, when, no matter how unintentionally, no matter how innocently, such choices condone the passions of the world—its admiration for power, its adoration of status, its love of luxuries, its attachment to frivolous pursuits, its glorification of violence, and its obsession with self-gratification. It must be realized that the isolation and despair from which so many suffer are products of an environment ruled by an all-pervasive materialism. And in this the friends must understand the ramifications of Bahá'u'lláh's statement that “the present-day order” must “be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.” Throughout the world today, young people are among the most enthusiastic supporters of the Plan and the most ardent champions of the Cause; their

numbers will, we are certain, increase from year to year. May every one of them come to know the bounties of a life adorned with purity and learn to draw on the powers that flow through pure channels.

(Universal House of Justice to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, 28 December 2010)

In closing, we feel compelled to address a few words to training institutes throughout the world: It should be remembered that the Bahá'í children's class teacher and the junior youth group animator, entrusted with so much responsibility for strengthening the moral foundations of the community, will, in most places, be a young person in his or her teens. Increasingly these young people will emerge, it can be expected, from the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme imbued with a strong twofold purpose, both to develop their inherent potentialities and to contribute to the transformation of society. But they may also come from any one of a number of educational backgrounds with all the hope in their hearts that, through strenuous concerted effort, the world will change. Irrespective of particulars, they will, one and all, share in the desire to dedicate their time and energy, talents and abilities, to service to their communities. Many, when given the opportunity, will gladly devote a few years of their lives to the provision of spiritual education to the rising generations. In the young people of the world, then, lies a reservoir of capacity to transform society waiting to be tapped. And the release of this capacity should be regarded by every institute as a sacred charge.

(Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 12 December 2011)

The Bahá'í Shrine in Montreal

The Bahá'í Shrine in Montreal is now open again to visitors following an extended period of renovation. Regular visiting hours are:

Monday to Friday: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday: 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Bahá'í Holy Days: 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.



Photographs, audio and video recordings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

During this period of remembrance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s visit to the West, the friends are calling Him to mind, drawing inspiration and solace from His example, and arising to act in His name. Creative attention is being given all across the country to ways of assisting a deeper understanding of the gifts and inexhaustible results of His travels. It is natural that photographs of Him would be drawn on in the course of such activities, as well as in sharing stories of His life at Feasts and in children’s classes.

As an aid to these wonderful efforts, and with the widespread use of social networking media, as well as many websites dedicated to the anniversary of His travels, the National Spiritual Assembly wished to recall the guidance of the Universal House of Justice about the use and electronic posting of photographs, images and recordings of the beloved Master.

The friends, whose deep reverence for the person of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is unquestioned, will readily understand why His photograph should not appear on the outside cover of a book, on a poster or as an icon or profile picture on Facebook or other networking sites. While the believers may make paintings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for their own personal satisfaction, their reproduction for distribution is discouraged. In drama, “while no personal representation of the Holy Ones should be made on stage or in pictorial form, there is no objection to Their words and utterances being reported.” (The Universal House of Justice, 15 March 1983 to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Concerning the audio and video recordings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, it is reserved for the Universal House of Justice to determine the rare occasions on which the video of the Master may be viewed. Similarly, the House of Justice has stated that the audio recording of His voice should be heard only on very special occasions and with the sanction of the National Spiritual Assembly. Individuals who have been entrusted with these precious archival items are free to keep them, but are asked to respect the above guidance. In this light, it is clear that neither the video nor the audio recording of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should be posted online.

A final, related note concerns the photograph of Bahá’u’lláh, the viewing of which is part of the pilgrimage program in a silent, sacred and reverent atmosphere. Some of the friends have written

expressing their distress to have found it on the internet. While the concern expressed is deeply appreciated, there is little that can be done related to sites that are not hosted by Bahá’ís, and no attention should be drawn to them.

The National Assembly hopes that this reminder of the reverence called for in approaching depiction of the Persons of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá will assist the friends as they seek to express their love for and draw closer to Them. Any questions you have about this guidance are most welcome, and may be addressed to either the National Spiritual Assembly or your Local Spiritual Assembly.



Main staircase inside the Mansion of Mazra’ih.
Photo: Bahá’í International Community

Reflecting on our relationship to the Institution of the Fund

When a human soul accepts Bahá'u'lláh as the Manifestation of God for this age and enters into the divine Covenant, that soul should progressively bring his or her whole life into harmony with the divine purpose – he becomes a co-worker in the Cause of God and receives the bounty of being permitted to devote his material possessions, no matter how meagre, to the work of the Faith.¹

Being a co-worker in the Cause of God affords an individual the opportunity to participate in efforts directed toward the transformation of both oneself and of the world around him or her so as to build a new civilization.

Yet, we know that in our society there are many powerful forces that affect us on a daily basis – forces that incline us towards lethargy, causing us to disregard the needs of the Cause and humankind. Not least among them are those that lead us to excessive consumption of goods and services. To some extent, our ability to resist such forces can be measured through our patterns of contribution to the Fund:

In the midst of a civilization torn by strifes and enfeebled by materialism, the people of Bahá are building a new world. We face at this time opportunities and responsibilities of vast magnitude and great urgency. Let each believer in his inmost heart resolve not to be seduced by the ephemeral allurements of the society around him, nor to be drawn into its feuds and short-lived enthusiasms, but instead to transfer all he can from the old world to that new one which is the vision of his longing and will be the fruit of his labours.²

It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 41-42)

These statements of the Universal House of Justice highlight the privilege of giving to the Fund, as a believer in Bahá'u'lláh, and the effect that such material donations can have on both the contributing individual and the surrounding

community, both local and broader afield. In a subsequent communication, the Universal House of Justice draws attention to an important aspect of the educational process of a growing community:

This is an aspect of the Cause which, we feel, is an essential part of the basic teaching and deepening of new believers. The importance of contributing resides in the degree of sacrifice of the giver, the spirit of devotion with which the contribution is made and the unity of the friends in this service; these attract the confirmations of God and enhance the dignity and self-respect of the individuals and the community.³

So important is our connection to the institution of the Fund that Shoghi Effendi said “all, no matter how modest their resources, must participate” in it.⁴

I cherish the hope that all the friends, realizing the necessity of this measure, will bestir themselves and contribute, however modestly at first, towards the speedy establishment and the increase of that Fund.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Bahá'í Administration*, p. 41-42)

The Universal House of Justice says:

We therefore call upon every Bahá'í to consecrate his life to the service of God and the betterment of mankind, so that manpower will not be lacking in the fields of pioneering, teaching and administrative service. Most urgently, may every believer give sacrificially of his substance, each in accordance with his means, to the funds of the Cause, local, national, continental and international, so that the material resources – the lifeblood of all activities – will be adequate for the tremendous work that we have to perform in the months and years immediately ahead. It requires a concentration of effort, a unity of purpose and a



HEARTBEAT

degree of self-sacrifice to match the heroic exertions of the victors of past plans in the progress of the Cause.⁵

References

- 1 Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 7 August 1985.
- 2 Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of East and West, 18 December 1963.
- 3 Universal House of Justice to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 7 August 1985.
- 4 Shoghi Effendi, quoted in a letter dated 18 December 1963 from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of East and West.
- 5 Universal House of Justice to the Followers of Bahá'u'lláh in every Land, 2 January 1984.



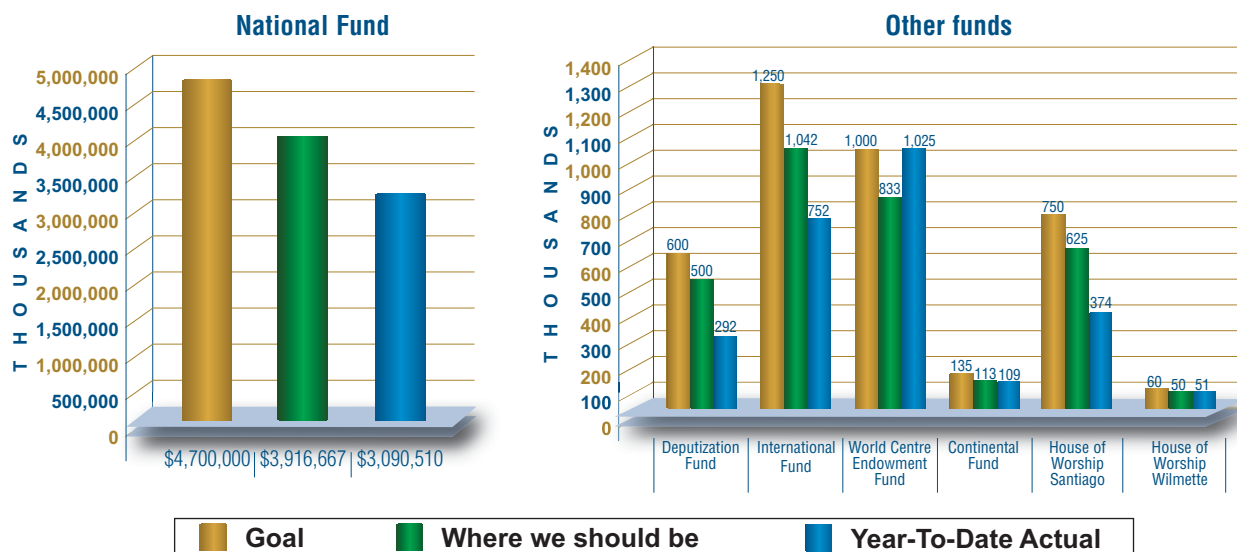
Reports continue to reach us about fundraising efforts for the construction of the Chile House of Worship. These pictures show a fundraising dinner organized by a junior youth group in Saanich, B.C. in late December. The amount of \$1256.19 was raised for the Chile House of Worship fund. The junior youth brought handicrafts and items for sale, and the parents contributed to the pot luck dinner. In the first picture, left to right: Missagh Nouredin, Gohar Khastar, Sepehr Rohani, Adeeb Akhavan, Sasha Khastar, Kaylee Mahbobi, Rayan Javanmardi, Bayan Safaee and Justin Stee.





Fund Update

May 1, 2011 to February 29, 2012



At a glance – our position during the current fiscal year (1 May 2011 to 30 April 2012)

National Fund All goals of Canada

THOUSANDS

Goal	\$4,700	\$8,495
Where we should be	\$3,917	\$7,079
Where we are	\$3,091	\$5,694

How to contribute to the Funds of the Faith:

Through a regional branch of the National Fund operated by the Regional Bahá'í Council in your area. For further information, please contact the Bahá'í Council in your area (see page 57).

Through the National Spiritual Assembly: Kindly make your cheque payable to “Canadian Bahá'í Fund” and mail to:

The Treasury Department
Bahá'í National Centre
7200 Leslie Street
Thornhill, ON L3T 6L8

Through a Local Spiritual Assembly: For further information, please contact the Treasurer of your Local Assembly.

Online at www.bahiafunds.ca, directly from your bank chequing account or through your credit card. Contributions may be made on a one-time basis, or set up in an ongoing manner, such as every Bahá'í month, on a specific day of the Gregorian month, twice each month, or bi-weekly.

Through a Pre-Authorized Payment Plan offered by chartered banks. If you wish to use this method, please contact the Treasury Department of the National

Spiritual Assembly and request a “Pre-Authorized Payment Authorization Form”. You can reach the Treasury Department by:

- Mail: At the above address
- Fax: (905) 889-8184
- E-mail: treasury@cdnbnc.org

Earmarking:

Should you wish to earmark part or all of your contribution for a specific Fund, kindly indicate this accordingly. Examples of the various Funds of the Faith are:

- Local Fund (only through a Local Spiritual Assembly or Online method – see above)
- Regional Branch of the National Fund
- National Fund
- Deputization Fund
- International Fund
- World Centre Endowment Fund
- Continental Fund
- Wilmette House of Worship Fund
- Santiago House of Worship Fund



The Right of God

Q: Knowing that Huqúqu'lláh is expended under the sole discretion of the Universal House of Justice, what are some of the uses for these funds?

A: Shoghi Effendi has stated that: 'In accordance with the explicit text of the Will and Testament, Huqúqu'lláh should be expended on teaching the Cause of God in countries throughout the East and the West, establishing institutions, building Bahá'í Temples and promoting benevolent undertakings and the general weal.'

(From a translation of a letter dated 15 January 1933 written by Shoghi Effendi; 2007 Compilation on Huqúqu'lláh, #108)

"In these days, as it was during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi, all funds received by the House of Justice are used to promote the interests of the Faith at the Bahá'í World Centre and worldwide. The purposes for which Huqúqu'lláh funds will be used in the future will be determined by the House of Justice, as may be called for."

(From a letter dated 7 February 2001 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

سؤال: با علم بر آنکه حقوق الله تنها بر طبق تشخیص بیت العدل صرف می گردد، بعضی از مصارف این وجوه کدام هستند؟

جواب: >> حضرت ولی امرالله فرموده اند: > برطبق نص صریح الواح وصایا، حقوق الله باید صرف تبلیغ امرالله در ممالک شرق و غرب، ایجاد موسسات، احداث معابد بهائی و ترویج امور عام المنفعه گردد.<

(ترجمه نامه مورخه 15 ژانویه 1933 مرقومه حضرت ولی امرالله جزوه حقوق، 2007، شماره 108)

>> در این ایام، مشابه دوران ولایت حضرت شوقی ربانی، تمامی وجوه وصول شده توسط بیت العدل صرف ترویج مصالح امر در مرکز جهانی بهائی و سراسر جهان می گردد. مقاصدی که وجوه حقوق الله در آینده صرف آنها خواهد گردید توسط بیت العدل، برحسب مقتضیات، مقرر خواهد شد.<<

از نامه مورخه 7 فوریه 2001 از جانب بیت العدل به یکی از احباء)

5 YEAR PLAN SPOTLIGHT

Teaching Centre member visits Canada

It is not every day that cluster agencies have an opportunity to consult with one of the members of the International Teaching Centre about what they are learning in their efforts to advance the process of growth in their own backyard.

This event unfolded recently in both the Ontario clusters of Ottawa and Toronto, when each was given an unparalleled opportunity to consult directly with Mr. Chuungu Malitonga, a Counsellor serving the International Teaching Center.

There are only 100 clusters in the world, he said, where this type of conversation can take place with significant depth.

One of the Continental Counsellors, Mr. Dan Scott, the Auxiliary Board members serving each cluster, members of the Regional Bahá'í Council, and in Toronto a member of the National Assembly and two members of the Toronto Assembly participated in the meetings.

Immediately preceding these two meetings was the arrival of the 12 December 2011 message from the Universal House of Justice, addressed to all National Spiritual Assemblies. The letter describes how the organizing principle of the curriculum of the Ruhi Institute is to develop capacity in each of its participants, whether Bahá'í or not, to serve the Cause and humanity, likening it to walking a path of service.



Mr. Chuungu Malitonga (back row, middle) with the Ottawa, Ont. cluster agencies and other members of Bahá'í institutions.

There is a lot we must strive to understand about the nature of this path. Mr. Malitonga encouraged the cluster agencies to think deeply and in significant detail about how they will further widen the path and welcome the efforts of every individual who has a willingness to arise and serve, paying particular attention to channelling the energies of the youth.

The Ottawa and Toronto clusters have come to a point where they can appreciate how the path “may seem easy at the outset but becomes more challenging further along.”

(Universal House of Justice, 12 December 2012)

These two clusters have each reached the significant milestone of having 100 individuals working with about 1,000 participants in core activities. Their challenge as a cluster on the frontier of learning is to humbly examine every aspect of their functioning, consider the sacred nature of their role and clearly determine how they will accompany these individuals, and those who have yet to come onto the path, and empower them to achieve their spiritual destiny to serve the Cause of God.

Mr. Malitonga asked many questions on behalf of the International Teaching Centre. While his demeanour was loving and joyful, he was also very systematic and purposeful. The nature of the work of the cluster agencies, the practicalities of their collaboration for an entire cycle of growth, and the nature of the conversations needed to empower and enkindle the hearts of those they must accompany were all thought about in detail. It was a powerful reminder of the sacred obligation we all have to align our attitudes, methods and approaches with the Plan of the Universal House of Justice.

The regional institutions also met with Mr. Malitonga in mid-December in Toronto. Mr. Malitonga was joined by Counsellors Dan Scott and Dr. Anne Boyles, as well as the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly. Also attending were a few members of the Ottawa and Toronto cluster agencies, and individuals serving regional institutions in British Columbia and Quebec. The primary purpose of the meeting was to explore what is needed for the institutions operating at the regional level to have the structures in place to facilitate the advancement of each cluster in the region, especially for those in the forefront of

learning.

The consultations began with a close look at the emerging demands at the level of the clusters. Mr. Malitonga guided our thinking about the varied aspects of the teaching work by asking many gentle questions which gave us space to reflect on our own experience and begin to more thoroughly read the reality of the whole region.

The emerging demands in the clusters require structures that must be put in place by the regional institutions to ensure that certain aspects of growth are systematically advanced and coordinated:

- that human resources are being systematically and effectively raised from the courses of the institute process, and that the institutions are facilitating their mobilization;
- that individuals in a cluster moving towards the first milestone will have the support and encouragement of the Auxiliary Board members and their assistants;
- that an Area Teaching Committee is supported by the Regional Bahá'í Council in their efforts to strengthen the devotional character of the community it serves, to carry out home visits and are accompanied to plan their entire cycles of growth in concert with the institute coordinators;
- that Local Spiritual Assemblies are intimately engaged in the process of growth;
- that the Regional Coordinator is guided and lovingly supported by the Institute Board to build capacity in the institute coordinators who work to raise the numbers of those capable of acting as tutors.

The requisite structures, Mr. Malitonga said, must ensure the steady multiplication of children's classes and their teachers, as well as the steady development of the spiritual empowerment programme for junior youth.

A flourishing and dynamic junior youth group will be a catalyst for an organic pattern of growth which leads to home visits, study circles, children's classes, devotional meetings and firesides in the neighbourhoods.

At the heart of each structure Mr. Malitonga detailed, lies the sacred spirit of accompaniment that must permeate our every interaction. He asked about the nature and quality of our conversations which aim to empower individuals to arise and assist the process of strengthening an existing pattern of growth, or to establish another one.

What does the conversation look like if we ardently desire to increase the number of people engaged in the educational process? What is the spirit of the conversation that will attract individuals to serve the Cause? How will we work alongside a committee, coordinator or tutor, to help each plan and execute lines of action until they are able, in turn, to help others do the same?

The Ontario region will benefit tremendously from the insights gained from the visit of Mr. Malitonga. The regional institutions, and the cluster agencies of Toronto and Ottawa were humbled by the outpouring of love and bounty which were showered upon us during these days when the World Centre directed its gaze toward us.

- Bahá'í Council of Ontario



A junior youth group of 12-year-olds in Waterloo, Ont. with their animator. Back row, left to right: Pardis Rajabi, Shoghi Heyratian, and Parnia Rajabi. Middle row, left to right: Nichole (Niku) Jaber, Arisa Afruzi, and Mona Ostavar-Roshani at the bottom. The group meets every Monday evening. One of their projects was to introduce Ayyám-i-Há to the community of interest through a service project.

Area Teaching Committee members reflect on visit

Mr. Malitonga moved our thinking forward by assisting us in our reflection on the processes of growth in Ottawa and the current state of coordination between the agencies.

Through illustrative examples gleaned from the friends around the world, we were taken through a process of reflection on the guidance.

One element of the discussion was the recognition of the dynamics of growth in Ottawa, in particular reference to the path of service so beautifully illustrated by the Universal House of Justice in the 12 December 2011 Message.

We were reminded that the initiatives of the friends, whether resulting from a collective project or an individual initiative, were all a part of a spectrum of growth. The challenge before the cluster agencies is to support and encourage the friends to continue moving along this path. We have to refine our means of coordination to accommodate different paces of growth.

Another area of discussion was the merging of these two realities discussed in the 12 December Message: the educational processes (children's classes, junior youth groups and study circles) and the three month cycles of activity with their phases of reflection, planning, expansion and consolidation.

We began to reflect: have we missed the opportunities for growth in some core activities? In terms of teaching, Mr. Malitonga highlighted the importance of refining our methods and learning more clearly how to teach among certain populations.

How do we share the message of the Faith with parents of junior youth? Is the teaching approach similar to direct teaching experiences in different settings or do we reflect deeply on the teachings on moral and spiritual education from Ruhi Book 5: *Releasing the Powers of Junior Youth* and learn how to teach in this context? How can the realities of teaching and educational processes come together as a united process?

Although there were many gems from the discussion, another highlight was the reminder of the effects of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation on the communities in which we are engaging. For Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation to have a transformative effect, we need to work together to dive deeper into the reality of our neighbourhoods. We need to increase the number of individuals who have access

to the Writings and are participants in the community building process so beautifully unleashed through the core activities – to reach large numbers, we have to learn how to engage young people who will carry this civilization-building process forward. We have to learn how to work with others so that they rise to new heights of service.

At the end of the loving consultation, we felt as though, without realizing it, Mr. Malitonga had gracefully unlocked a vision that now stands clearly before us as we learn how to strive for large-scale growth in the community and work more diligently to collaborate and coordinate at the level of the cluster agencies. It was a bounty to participate in such a consultation.

– Area Teaching Committee member

It is difficult to summarize the learning points that were so eloquently shared by Mr. Malitonga, but here are few of them:

The cluster agencies of Ottawa were given the opportunity to recognize that all neighbourhoods in a given cluster can be seen on a spectrum of growth.

At one end of this continuum are areas of concentration that are pushing the frontiers of learning, requiring more resources. However, the cluster agencies must reflect on how support is given to all the neighbourhoods and ensure that the current structure is adequate to accompany the friends. Tracking the statistics of all neighbourhoods in the cluster, regardless of where they lie on the spectrum is essential to the tasks of the cluster agencies as they indicate the needs of coordination.

It is necessary to learn about the nature of the conversations related to direct teaching and the



Participants at the combined reflection meeting of Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, UBC and New Westminster, B.C.

Photo : Tobin Smith

expansion of the educational process and not fragment them, but see them as one reality – working towards the movement of a population.

During the latter part of the meeting, the cluster agencies learned about the importance of reflecting on the current scheme of coordination in the cluster, while considering the implication that growth has on its evolution.

It was highlighted that all cluster agencies are learning about a high level of collaboration and raising more people who can assist in an organic manner. In this light, the roles of the coordinators and Area Teaching Committee, and the nature of their collaboration were explored.

After the meeting, the cluster agencies have found that the learning from this meeting is in fact ongoing. Many of the points raised require continued consultation among the institute coordinators and the Area Teaching Committee.

– Area Teaching Committee member

Junior youth, institute coordinators reflect

In late December, in Ontario, the Toronto Bahá'í Centre was abuzz with activity. A continental junior youth coordinator training, a regional institute coordinator training and a city-wide junior youth camp all took place at the location simultaneously.

Some of the junior youth coordinators assisted with the junior youth camp while some of the institute

coordinators attended information sessions about the junior youth programme offered to the wider Toronto community.

Junior youth coordinator trainings: purpose and background

Seventeen youth involved in the coordination of the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme from across Canada and parts of the United States gathered for 12 days in late December in Toronto, the learning site for this part of the continent.

They met to reflect on their efforts over the past six months, study guidance, and develop a long-term vision for growth as well as an immediate plan for the next few months.

The concepts of a 'learning site' and reflection seminars for coordinators, followed by the Office for Social and Economic Development (OSED) in the Holy Land, are relatively new. The Universal House of Justice described their relationship to the development of the junior youth programme in the Ridván 2010 message:

To help others advance swiftly in this direction [sustaining over one thousand junior youth in the programme], the Office is establishing a network of sites in all continents, with the assistance of a corps of believers, that can be used to provide training to coordinators from scores upon scores of clusters. These resource persons continue to support coordinators upon their return to their respective clusters, enabling them to create a spiritually charged environment in which the junior youth programme can take root.



Cluster Institute Coordinators from the Atlantic region. Coordinators gathered in Prince Edward Island last summer to reflect on the Five Year Plan.

These coordinator gatherings are typically held twice a year at the learning site. The structure and content of these trainings respond to the needs of the coordinators and are constantly evolving as we engage more and more junior youth. They generally involve: an in-depth reflection on the past six months of action for the 10 or so clusters associated with the learning site; an attentive study of recent guidance and documents issued by OSED for coordinators and resource persons; a diversity of field visits to animators, junior youth groups, animator gatherings, institute campaigns, or any number of relevant and practical experiences that would enrich the coordinators' visit understanding; and several detailed planning sessions in order to prepare for the next six months.

As mentioned in the Ridván 2010 message, many of the coordinators are serving on a full-time basis, usually on a year or two of service, or at least serving on a part-time basis. It is necessary for them to learn how to create detailed daily plans for the growth of the junior youth programme.

The junior youth coordinators who gathered for the December 2011 seminar were blessed to have a member of the International Teaching Centre, Mr. Chuungu Malitonga, among them for the first day of their consultations. He helped the coordinators reflect on the qualitative aspects of their work, a theme that ran through the 12 days of the training as we reflected on the implications of the 12 December 2011 message from the Universal House of Justice.

He also highlighted that the entire scheme of coordination of the clusters associated with the learning site – in other words, the children's class and study circle coordination schemes as well as the work of Area Teaching Committees – would have to receive added attention to become increasingly effective. The International Teaching Centre will be keenly observing these clusters to learn from their insights into the work of coordination.

Insights from the training

To give even a brief overview of all of the subjects covered during the training would be impossible. However, highlighting a few of the themes and ideas that were treated in depth at this recent training might help convey how the work of coordination has evolved over the past couple of years. The network of people associated with the Toronto learning site currently accompany about 700 junior youth.

A new understanding emerged that it is not only the learning site in Toronto that generates knowledge,

but the network in its entirety.

The coordinators also spent many hours reflecting on the nature of capacity building, analysing what steps they had practically taken to accompany animators, and how they could become more systematic in their ongoing support.

Another theme revolved around engaging one of the protagonists of the Plan: the community. The coordinators consulted at length about strategies to involve the entire community in the advancement of the junior youth programme.

"I learned that it is important to provide everyone who wishes to assist or learn about the junior youth programme . . . the opportunity to ask questions, express thoughts, comments or to simply learn more," wrote one animator.

"It is important that we become more inclusive so that everyone has the opportunity to become comfortable inviting community members whether from Bahá'í backgrounds or not, young or old, to walk together on this path of service, assisting and contributing to the empowerment of junior youth."

Finally, the coordinators' vision of growth was broadened and sharpened, focusing on the goal of a tenfold increase in the number of junior youth participating in the programme by Ridván 2016. The practical implications of this goal were unfolded in detailed plans that placed emphasis on meeting large numbers of new junior youth and mobilizing new animators, as opposed to only focusing on maintaining the existing groups.



Anthea Nelson-James (front), Ottawa, Ont., Nika Baghaie, Richmondhill, Ont., and Keyvan Khadem, Burnaby, B.C. at the junior youth coordinator training.

"I learned that accuracy is important," said the same animator. "Planning our goals precisely down to dates and times and working with all animators to make these types of plans and goals really helps."

She also said that accuracy was important when reflecting on the narrative of the junior youth programme in the the clusters, looking at the progress and tests from the past and present, and having a practical and unified vision about how the cluster can move forward.

Reaching these goals, the coordinators were reminded, will require us all, as individuals, communities and institutions, to reach new heights of sacrifice, and therefore joy, as we soar in the heaven of His knowledge as true friends.

- Ilya Zrudlo, Montreal, Que.

Institute seminar participants share insights from the field

In its message of Ridván 2010, the Universal House of Justice called upon believers and institutions to strengthen the institute process, the instrument critical to realizing the potential of local populations to create the "dynamics of an irrepressible movement." As a result, there was the emergence of regular gatherings of study circle coordinators, often referred to as institute seminars.

This was the fourth Institute Seminar organized by the Institute Board of Ontario. One of the seminar's main objectives was to provide a space for reflection that allowed those serving as institute coordinators and tutors to review and share what they have been learning in the field. The seminar took place in late December and was held at the Toronto Bahá'í Centre. Study circle coordinators and tutors from five clusters - Brampton-Peel, Durham, Waterloo, Ottawa, and Mississauga - participated in the seminar.

The seminar began with the coordinators analyzing the reality of their clusters. They analyzed the state of the institute process and gave a narrative about how their cluster had evolved up to the present. The remainder of the seminar was spent studying the 12 December 2011 message from the Universal House of Justice.

Coordinators reflected on how the capacity building process fostered by the Ruhi curriculum is likened to walking a path of service. They shared their experiences on what the different elements of that path look like in their own clusters - how it invites participation, beckons participants to new horizons, demands effort and movement, accommodates different paces and strides, and how it is structured

and defined.

The coordinators also consulted on the importance of collaboration among the various institutions working at the cluster level - between the different institute coordinators, assistants, and the Area Teaching Committee. Given the importance of youth outlined in paragraph 21 of the 12 December 2011 message, there was quite a bit of sharing of experiences on how to work with youth in their respective clusters.

The coordinators also had a chance to visit tutors serving in Toronto during the training. The focus of the visits was twofold - first to learn from the tutors in an advanced cluster about their experiences and second to help them in their planning.

Each tutor gained different insights and experiencing particular challenges, and so had different things to share. All the coordinators felt they were able to gain valuable insights from this time spent in the field.

A final portion of the seminar was focused on planning. Taking into consideration all that had been consulted about, the coordinators were encouraged and assisted to make detailed three-month plans. They left eager to consult with those in their home clusters and put their plans into action.

The Institute Board hopes that such seminars continue on a semi-annual basis and that their richness continues to increase as experience in the field grows.

- The Institute Board of Ontario



Participants in a Toronto neighbourhood-based junior youth camp bake together in late December. Participants from the junior youth coordinator training also assisted with the camp.

Quebec Assembly members reflect

In late November, a meeting of all Local Spiritual Assemblies across the province of Quebec was held to increase understanding of the new stage in the exercise of the Assemblies' responsibilities "to diffuse the Word to God, to mobilize the energies of the believers, and to forge an environment that is spiritually edifying." (Universal House of Justice, *Ridván 2010*, par. 22)

Counsellor Ann Boyles and three members of the National Spiritual Assembly attended the meeting. The arts were incorporated into the content of the weekend's program through devotional interludes prepared by various Assemblies. Members of cluster agencies actively participated in the workshops as resource people.

Five different Assembly members from different parts of the province reflected on the meeting:

The first participant is a new believer who lives far from a large metropolitan centre. She writes:

"From the beginning we spoke about the Five Year Plan . . . that as Assembly members we have a triple responsibility – as individuals who are personally engaged in the Plan, as members of an institution . . . and as members of a community who treat others as they would treat members of their own family."

"We also talked about becoming used to thinking in terms of large numbers when we make plans for the development of our communities – not 20, not 200, not even 2,000 but rather 20,000 . . . This may take time but we need to move quickly in a spirit of loving collaboration. To do this, we need to begin by having 'meaningful and distinctive' conversations with new friends, then, when a trusting relationship



Participants in a meeting of Assembly members across Quebec.



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has been established, invite them to participate in a core activity, ensuring that there is cohesion among the core activities of our community. . . But what is equally important, in addition to 'sowing the seed,' is following through like a farmer who takes good care of his garden."

The participant also described how the welcoming attitude of the local Bahá'í community influenced her whole family and how they nurtured her in the way that the guidance talks about.

She sums up her thoughts about the meeting:

"I have to tell you that this conference was my first experience of this nature. I didn't know what to expect. I was dazzled by my experience and I want to tell you that 'Bahá'í perfume' has a fantastic power!"

The second participant has been a Bahá'í for many years and has been experimenting with implementing the provisions of the Plan. This meeting helped crystallize certain elements of the Plan for her. For example, she understands now that reflection meetings are for "those who are engaged in activities at the cluster level." (Universal House of Justice, Ridván

2010 message, par. 21)

She also sees that the Nineteen Day Feast plays a role in mobilizing more friends to become involved in the core activities. She talked about the importance of the role of the Assembly and its members in fostering a welcoming environment, especially during the Feast. At a recent Feast, a couple who had not attended for a while was present. In inquiring about their well-being, she found out that the husband has recently started his own business. She invited him to come to speak to her study circle, composed of young people, about his experience. What a wonderful way to strengthen the spiritual and social fabric of the community!

This participant was also moved by the stirring presentation on the new Regional Branch of the National Fund by the Council's treasurer. It became clear to her that each Assembly member is responsible for managing the Funds of the Faith and for educating the friends in the spiritual principles related to Bahá'í contributions.

The third participant serves in a small community in Quebec. The participant writes:

I arrived at this meeting feeling like a complete stranger. I was the only member of my Assembly attending it and I only knew a couple of people



Participants in a Toronto, Ont. junior youth camp with some of the participants in the junior youth coordinator training. About 60 youth across the cluster participated in junior youth camps during the Christmas break. The 11 and 12-year-olds in the camp focused on analyzing our current media environment. The 13 and 14 year-olds in the camp worked at refining their ability to perceive beauty and to help others do the same – with the hope this would also strengthen their desire to protect the physical environment. Participants also studied portions of different junior youth textbooks, went on outings, participated in artistic activities and shared what they learned with people on the street near the Bahá'í Centre. For some, it was the tenth junior youth camp they had attended. One of the participants talked about why she kept on returning to the camps: "I keep coming because of the discussions we have. There isn't anywhere else where I get to have such good life discussions."

from other Local Spiritual Assemblies and from the Council. The reason that I decided to attend the meeting was that I was feeling quite frustrated. I was looking for inspiration and I definitely found it.

Studying the guidance from the Universal House of Justice as well as hearing both the good and not-so-good experiences of the different Assembly members caused me to think a lot about my own actions and interactions with the community. After the last workshop I attended, I knew that I had no right to “complain” about the Assembly I was a part of, or to complain about anything for that matter. I realized that the only way for things to change was to actually be an agent of change.

After the weekend I decided that I had to really start working on my individual initiatives and I completely put aside my worries about the Assembly. I became certain that things would improve one way or another. My whole mood changed. Little projects that I have been planning for the past three years – a group for young children and their parents, a devotional meeting and a study circle with a seeker – are finally being realized. I feel that these activities are already influencing a few other members of my community. I realized that focusing on the negative was only making me more frustrated. So instead, I decided to focus on the positive. And that is exactly what all the messages for this Five Year Plan ask us to do.

The fourth participant has also been a Bahá’í for many years but found herself elected to an Assembly for the first time last Ridván. She felt that the presence of all members of the Spiritual Assembly of Innu Takuaikan Uashat Mak Mani-Utenam, who drove for 12 hours to attend the meeting in Laval, was a blessing for all of the participants.

Some of the friends who came from small communities and were not connected to many other Bahá’í friends mentioned at various times in the meeting that they felt isolated. But the participant felt that understanding the guidance of the Universal House of Justice that “under a wide diversity of conditions, in virtually any cluster, it is possible for an expanding nucleus of individuals to generate a movement towards the goal of a new World Order” (28 December 2010, par. 3) helps transform this feeling of isolation into a challenge which can be overcome, step by step.

The fifth participant had served on different Local Spiritual Assemblies in Quebec and outside of it for the past few years. She was delighted to meet friends

who are also serving on Assemblies from all across the province and felt particularly encouraged by the presence of young Assembly members and also the cluster agencies.

The participant also appreciated how the Counsellor and the members of the National Spiritual Assembly patiently accompanied the local Assembly members, injecting the right words at the right time to clarify the meaning of the messages and to sound the clarion call to service.

She was particularly touched by a passage from the January 1, 2011 message from the Universal House of Justice that was studied in the meeting:

“We are certain that, through the consultations about the Plan in which you participate your understanding will deepen and, conscious of the spiritual forces that support you, you will resolve to make this global enterprise a personal concern and become as occupied with the well-being of the human family as you are with that of your dearest kin.”

– From *Learning in Quebec*, Bahá’í Council of Quebec

B.C. training campaign focuses on quality

For two weeks during the winter break, about 30 Bahá’ís from throughout British Columbia gathered every day at the Vancouver Bahá’í Centre to attend a wonderful, joyous and focused program, the “Candle after Candle” training campaign. The goal of this two-week training was to help the participants build capacity for service and to establish strong core activities within eight neighbourhoods. The participants of the campaign tried to create core activities with strong and healthy roots during the expansion phase in two clusters (Vancouver-Richmond-UBC and Burnaby-New Westminster). The program focused on the quality of the activities rather than the number of activities established. This way, communities are not overloaded with weak activities that they cannot sustain.

What made the “Candle after Candle” campaign different from others is the way it was organized. It was inter-generational and focused on multiple neighbourhoods and study books. During the day, members broke out into four study circles to study



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books 3, 5, 6 and 7 of the Ruhi sequence.

Each team consisted of one or two members of each study group. This way, the members of the teaching teams could share with each other what they learned from their studies as they applied it in the field. This created a strong sense of unity and collective learning. Each morning, participants arrived at the Bahá'í Centre to say prayers, sing songs, laugh, and each team reflected and shared what they learned from serving in their neighbourhoods the previous day.

- Institute Board of British Columbia

Niagara cluster consults on Five Year Plan

Friends from the Ontario communities of Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, St. Catharines and Welland gathered in St. Catharines in mid-January to consult together on the Five Year Plan.

"It was wonderful to be reminded of the all-encompassing nature of the Faith and how we should reflect on our interaction and teaching with the people of our community," remarked one friend.

"We seem to have built walls - out of habit and misunderstanding - that separate the Bahá'ís from the rest of the world, but these walls aren't real and it's time to tear them down," said another soul.

The gathering began with refreshments, provided by the Niagara Falls Bahá'ís, and socializing, followed by a short devotional program prepared by the Fort Erie Bahá'í community and its children.

Auxiliary Board member Brian Graham guided the friends through the contents of the 12 December 2011 letter from the Universal House of Justice to National Spiritual Assemblies followed by a visual presentation on the Five Year Plan and its goals by Ted Slavin.

In thinking about the nature of the Faith and what we as individuals are being asked to accomplish, another participant said, "We are asking all the peoples of the world to enter the Faith, and through prayer and study and service they will be transformed."

Everyone felt this cluster gathering had been successful and are looking forward to the next cluster gathering in April.

- *Cluster Niagara Weekly*

PIONEERING

FIVE YEAR PLAN SPOTLIGHT

Regional youth gatherings inspire contemplation and action

In response to a call from the Bahá'í Council, more than 65 youth and young adults from nine clusters in Alberta came together in Calgary in December for the first regional youth gathering in several years.

More than 200 youth and young adults attended the Ontario youth gathering in Toronto in mid-January, with a busload of 40 arriving from Ottawa, Ont. alone.

The organizers described the gatherings as part of an ongoing conversation focused on the empowerment of young people to serve their communities, a conversation that has become more defined with experience.

The gathering was reminded that youth have always made significant contributions to the Faith.

In each gathering the respective Bahá'í Council welcomed the groups and then a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors spoke followed by a representative of the National Assembly.

The Counsellor shared a number of inspiring ideas with the youth, including:

- A movement involves structure, focus, content and discipline, and that the previous generation had laboured for many years to generate content for the youth movement.
- We began the last century with horses and ended it with the space shuttle.
- The thinking process must envision the whole reality and not be fragmented -the question is not whether youth will study or serve the Cause, but rather asking how they will do both.
- The institutions hope that many of the youth will give their time to the junior youth program and train to be animators.
- Junior youth need role models who show them that justice exists. They can see the contradictions all around them - when people say one thing and do another. This leads to a breaking down of the human will.



Participants in the regional youth gathering in Ontario.



Participants in the regional youth gathering in Ontario.



Participants in the regional youth gathering in Alberta. From left to right: Taea Ryhard, Sama Imanverdi, Leila Hedley, Monir Imanverdi and Dorna Sadeghi.



Participants in the regional youth gathering in Alberta.

- The junior youth program has a lot of depth to it and their younger peers enjoy a challenge. They often have first-hand experience with hardship and have a lot to offer.
- An animator of a junior youth group will help to develop their potential in a way which does not lead to a pre-occupation with the self.
- The Counsellor stressed that there is no one else working with this young population with a goal to empower and build their capacity for service to humanity.
- A youth who animates a junior youth group for 3-4 years can effectively raise up a group of avowed supporters of the Plan who naturally enter the main sequence of courses and offer core activities.



Break out groups provided an opportunity for youth to study ideas related to junior youth and service to humanity in more depth as well as providing a space for them to share their plans and activities.

By the end of the Ontario gathering, 12 individuals pledged to offer a year of service, and 54 youth pledged to offer a 2-4 month period of service.

The Bahá'í Council of Alberta was deeply moved by the youth who made every effort to attend this gathering, particularly those whose post-secondary exams were occurring at the same time.

The Bahá'í Council of Ontario is confident the momentum which has been created by the youth gathering will continue to gather force as the Assemblies, Cluster Agencies, and the Auxiliary Board members serving the region continue their encouragement and loving support of the youth.

– Bahá'í Councils of Alberta and Ontario



From left to right: Taea Ryhard, Lena Maani Hesari and Nava Manshadi.



'Abdu'l-Bahá's first weeks in

America

"Do you want to go to the ship with me and see my cabin?"

It was an excited 15 year-old youth who uttered the question to his friend. The two of them traveled to Alexandria, and went to the harbour where the *Cedric* was waiting for its next journey to New York City. The two young men went on the boat and examined it thoroughly.

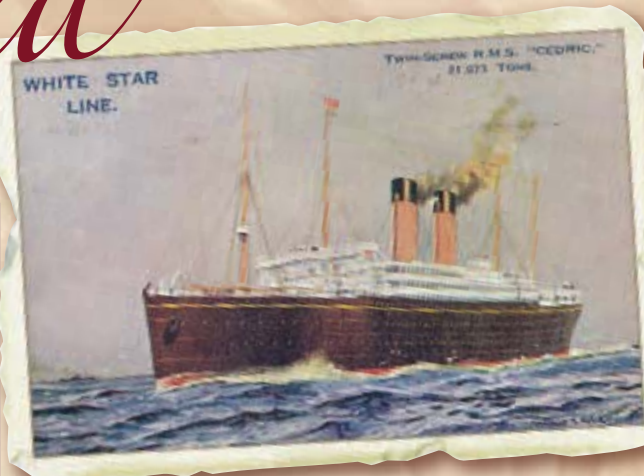
The friend later wrote: "He was extremely happy, and so was I very happy for him. I made him promise to write to me when he got to America, and he said he would."¹

The excited youth was Shoghi Effendi. He was to join his beloved grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in the next stage of His travels throughout the West. But this was not to be. As the ship stopped at Naples, the Italian health inspectors determined that Shoghi Effendi and two other travel companions were sick with trachoma, and could not continue the journey.

As the Italo-Turkish war was still underway, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was suspicious about the diagnosis:

These Italians took us for Turks. They sent a report to this effect and stopped three of our party from proceeding. One was a secretary, the other a cook. If they had stopped only these two it would have mattered little. But why should they treat that tender youth Shoghi Effendi so harshly? They have treated us with injustice; nevertheless I have always helped and am still helping them, whether at Alexandria or at Haifa.²

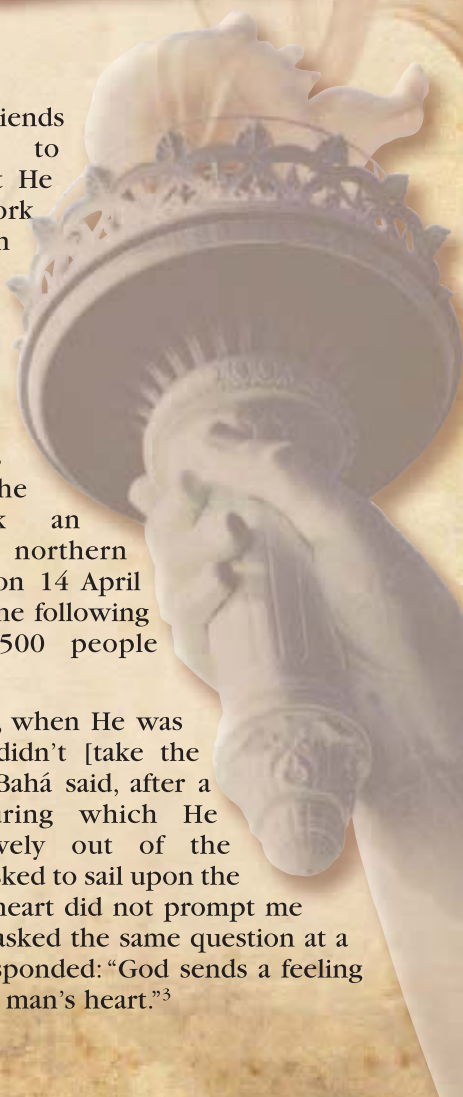
The remaining companions of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the journey to New York were three Persians - Siyyid Asadu'lláh-i-Qumí, Dr. Amin Fareed, and Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání - in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Woodcock, and their daughter from Canada, Mr. and Mrs. Austin from the U.S. and Miss Mathew from England.



RMS Cedric

Some of the friends had suggested to 'Abdu'l-Bahá that He sail to New York from England on the *Titanic*, a ship that was brand new and faster. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, however, preferred to take the *Cedric*. As is well known, the *Titanic* struck an iceberg in the northern Atlantic Ocean on 14 April 1912, and sank the following day leaving 1,500 people dead.

Later in America, when He was asked why He didn't [take the *Titanic*], 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, after a long pause during which He looked reflectively out of the window, "I was asked to sail upon the *Titanic*, but my heart did not prompt me to do so." When asked the same question at a later date, He responded: "God sends a feeling of misgiving into man's heart."³





'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S FIRST WEEKS IN AMERICA

'Abdu'l-Bahá attracted the attention of His fellow passengers, and many sought out His company and opinions. Accounts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's observations and remarks during the 16-day journey on the *Cedric* sparkle with both charm and wisdom:

Of ships, trains and carriages, He said that they were "good for long and tedious journeys; but for recreation and holiday trips, horseback riding in the spring season in the country, which is full of flowers and green foliage and sparkling waters, is the best of all, and gives unique pleasure."⁴

Evidently, some of the Americans were bothered that the Persians wore their normal clothing and requested that they change into 'attire to suit the circumstances of the time and place.' 'Abdu'l-Bahá responded by asking them, "What harm is there in it? I do not care much about what is unimportant and what is not harmful to the Cause. They are trifles."⁵

And what was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's purpose in visiting America anyway? This was a question posed by a group of people aboard the *Cedric*, including a newspaper publisher. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained:

I am going to America at the invitation of peace congresses, as the fundamental principles of this

Cause are universal peace, the oneness of the world of humanity and the equality of the rights of men. As this is the age of lights and the century of mysteries, this lofty purpose is sure to be universally acknowledged and this Most Mighty Cause is certain to embrace the East and the West.⁶

On 10 April, 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in New York. As the ship passed the Statue of Liberty, 'Abdu'l-Bahá greeted it by throwing his arms wide open, saying: "There is the new world's symbol of liberty and freedom. After being 40 years a prisoner I can tell you that freedom is not a matter of place. It is a condition."⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahá was surrounded by enthusiastic reporters upon His arrival, and He was perfectly at ease with them. One of them asked: "What do you think of America?" "I like it," He replied. "Americans are optimistic. If you ask them how they are, they say 'All right!' If you ask them how things are going, they say, 'All right!' This cheerful attitude is good."⁸

The major newspapers of New York carried headlined stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá after His arrival:

BANISHED FIFTY YEARS, LEADER OF BAHAI HERE: PERSIAN PHILOSOPHER FAVORS WOMAN SUFFRAGE AND WILL TALK PEACE - *New York City Evening Mail*

PERSIAN TEACHER OF WORLD-PEACE IS HERE - *New York City Evening World*

ABDUL BAHÁ, DAZED BY CITY'S RUSH, CALLS NEW YORK A BEEHIVE - *New York Herald*⁹

An editorial in the New York City Evening Mail said:

Don't laugh at Abdul Abbas. He has an idea . . . people with ideas generally are laughed at. But after the world has laughed long enough, it turns around and eats the idea very solemnly and very greedily, and digests it, and makes it part of its bone and fiber . . .

We are not personally acquainted with Abdul Abbas, and we cannot tell how much charlatanry may be mixed up with his doctrine. But the idea in itself is good stuff . . . he is the strange anomaly of an oriental mystic who believes in woman suffrage and in Broadway. He is worth his picture in the papers.¹⁰

The Church of the Ascension was the venue of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's first public address in America. The church was packed to its capacity as the audience of 2,000 heard Him talk about the meaning of divine civilization on 14 April 1912:



Photo: bahai-library.com



'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S FIRST WEEKS IN AMERICA

For man two wings are necessary. One wing is physical power and material civilization; the other is spiritual power and divine civilization. With one wing only, flight is impossible. Two wings are essential. Therefore, no matter how much material civilization advances, it cannot attain to perfection except through the uplift of spiritual civilization.¹¹

People rushed forward to greet 'Abdu'l-Bahá after the talk. One lady took hold of His robe and burst into tears, and she was not able to talk through her sobbing.

Daily there were meetings held at the homes of the friends, and people from all walks of life were eager to meet Him. Many noteworthy individuals interacted with Him during those days, some for the first time: Martha Root, Edward and Carrie Kinney, Howard Colby Ives, Kahlil Gibran, Lua and Edward Getsinger, John Bosch and Juliet Thompson.

The day before 'Abdu'l-Bahá left for Washington He spoke at Earl Hall of Columbia University. The Hall was filled with students, professors and other interested people, who listened to Him speak about science and man's mastery over nature:

In brief, man through the possession of this ideal endowment of scientific investigation is the most noble product of creation, the governor of nature. He takes the sword from nature's hand and uses it upon nature's head. According to natural law night is a period of darkness and obscurity, but man by utilizing the power of electricity, by wielding this electric sword overcomes the darkness and dispels the gloom. Man is superior to nature and makes nature do his bidding. Man is a sensitive being; nature is without sensation. Man has memory and reason; nature lacks them. Man is nobler than nature. There are powers within him of which nature is devoid. It may be claimed that these powers are from nature itself and that man is a part of nature. In answer to this statement we will say that if nature is the whole and man is a part of that whole, how could it be possible for a part to possess qualities and virtues which are absent in the whole?¹²

At the Bowery Mission, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to the poor and the downtrodden. On that occasion He gave Juliet Thompson and Edward Getsinger a thousand-franc note each to convert into smaller change, so that He could personally distribute it to the 400 people that had gathered to listen to and see Him.

Back in the Hotel Ansonia 'Abdu'l-Bahá encountered a chambermaid, who had been deeply moved by His gift of roses to her; He emptied into her apron the bag containing the remainder of the coins. A Bahá'í told the chambermaid that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been giving money to the poor at the Bowery Mission. "I will do the same with this money. I too will give it," she said. Later that evening 'Abdu'l-Bahá was seated with a number of visitors to whom He was saying as He laughed: "Assuredly give to the poor! If you give them only words, when they put their hands into their pockets they will find themselves none the richer for you," when the chambermaid came in. Her eyes were tear-laden and approaching 'Abdu'l-Bahá she said: "I came to say goodbye, sir, and to thank you for all your goodness to me ... I never expected such goodness. And to ask you - to *pray* for me!"¹³



'Abdu'l-Bahá at the children's meeting at the home of Mrs. Goodall in Oakland. Photo: Bahá'ís of the United States. www.bahai.us

On 20 April 'Abdu'l-Bahá went on a five hour train-ride to Washington, D.C. To begin with, he stayed at the home of Mrs. Agnes Parsons; the first home in North America in which He resided. During those first days in the U.S. capital, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke at



'ABDU'L-BAHÁ'S FIRST WEEKS IN AMERICA

the Orient-Occident Unity Conference, at the Universalist Church, and at Howard University.

As the Bahá'í world draws its attention to the educational needs of the young in the current Five Year Plan, 'Abdu'l-Bahá brought this need to sharp focus a hundred years ago, as He attended a Bahá'í children's reception on 24 April. As He entered the hall, the children sang songs in His praise and were accompanied on the piano. 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked:

What a wonderful meeting this is! What a wonderful meeting this is! These are the children of the kingdom. The song we have just listened to was very beautiful in melody and words. The art of music is divine and effective. It is the food of the soul and spirit . . . The latent talents with which the hearts of these children are endowed will find expression through the medium of music. Therefore you must exert yourselves to make them proficient, teach them to sing with excellence and effect. Likewise it is necessary that the schools teach it in order that the souls and hearts of the pupils may become vivified and exhilarated and their lives be brightened with enjoyment . . . Know ye the value of these children for they are all my children.¹⁴

Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá attended a scientific gathering at the home of Alexander Graham Bell. Scientists at the meeting would explain their latest discoveries. Bell invited 'Abdu'l-Bahá to address the gathering, and His talk was so well received that the speaker that followed said: "The talk of the Master from the East was so wonderful that I find myself inadequate to say anything."¹⁵

The following evening, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was invited to dinner by the Turkish Ambassador, Yúsuf Díyá Páshá:

It was a notable occasion. He, Who for 40 years had been a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire, was receiving high tribute from the representative of that Empire in the capital of the great Republic of the West. Diya Pasha had prepared a written address in Turkish which he presented to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In it he referred to Him as 'the Unique One of the age, who had come to spread His glory and perfection amongst us,' but 'Abdu'l-Bahá said: "I am not worthy of this." Juliet Thompson recounts: "As I bade Zia Pasha good night, looking at me through a mist of tears, he said: 'Truly, He is a Saint.'"¹⁶

Among others who met 'Abdu'l-Bahá during these days was Theodore Roosevelt, who had been the U.S. President from 1901-1909.

Lee McClung, Treasurer of the United States had luncheon with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Afterward, he remarked: "I seemed to be in the presence of one of the great old prophets - Isaiah - Elijah - Moses. And yet - it was more than that - He was like Christ . . . No - *now* I have it! - He seemed to me like my Divine Father."¹⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahá's first stay in Washington ended with an elegant reception for dignitaries and city officials in His honour. Three hundred people attended the gathering and many of them sought to speak with Him personally: a judge, a mathematician, Admiral Peary (the explorer of the North Pole), a bishop, the chargé d'affaires of Switzerland and a member of Congress.

When this magnificent meeting ended, the guests came to 'Abdu'l-Bahá one-by-one to shake His hand and to say goodbye. The night was one of the most blessed nights and that meeting one of the most great and important meetings.¹⁸

References:

- 1 Earl Redman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst*, p. 51.
- 2 *Mahmúd's Diary*, p. 23.
- 3 Earl Redman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Their Midst*, p. 52.
- 4 *ibid*, p. 53.
- 5 *ibid*, p. 53.
- 6 *ibid*, p. 53-4.
- 7 *ibid*, p. 56.
- 8 *ibid*, p. 56.
- 9 *ibid*, p. 58-9.
- 10 *ibid*, p. 59-60.
- 11 H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha - The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 174.
- 12 *ibid*, p. 176.
- 13 *ibid*, p. 178.
- 14 *ibid*, p. 181.
- 15 *Mahmúd's Diary*, p. 58.
- 16 H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha - The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 183-4.
- 17 *ibid*, p. 184.
- 18 *Mahmúd's Diary*, p. 65.



Help with voting in Bahá'í elections

Spiritual Assemblies are elected each year during the Ridván period. How do Bahá'í electors decide for whom to vote? Are there ways we can help one another?

Help one another participate in elections? The idea may sound a bit surprising, given the Guardian's statement that "reference to personalities before the election would give rise to misunderstanding and differences." But here was his suggestion: "What the friends should do is to get thoroughly acquainted with one another, to exchange views, to mix freely and discuss among themselves the requirements and qualifications for such a membership without reference or application, however indirect, to particular individuals."¹

Would it be helpful to begin a national conversation on the "requirements and qualifications" for Assembly membership and continue it throughout the year? Has your community experimented with such discussions, or have you with your family and friends in the neighbourhood? If you have, *Bahá'í Canada* would love to hear about your experience and what you are learning.

In recent letters, the Universal House of Justice has provided a vision of how an Assembly might

function and evolve at this stage in the growth of the Faith. This can help electors think more deeply about the "requirements and qualifications" of Assembly membership. It also gives added perspective to the "necessary qualities" cited by the Guardian, among which are those "of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience."

The House of Justice continued: "With a heightened awareness of the functions to be performed by the elected body, the believer can properly assess those for whom a vote should be cast. From among the pool of those whom the elector believes to be qualified to serve, selection should be made with due consideration given to such other factors as age distribution, diversity, and gender. The elector should make his choice after careful thought over an extended period before the actual election."²

What "requirements and qualifications" for Assembly membership emerge from your discussions and reflection on the following recent perspectives of the Supreme Body? We welcome the fruit of your conversations.



Si Yu, Long Long Gao and Ed Muttart are busily preparing for the upcoming Richmond/Delta, B.C. Regional Convention.



BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

“Evolving relationships among administrative structures have brought the Local Spiritual Assembly to the threshold of a new stage in the exercise of its responsibilities to diffuse the Word of God, to mobilize the energies of the believers, and to forge an environment that is spiritually edifying. On previous occasions we have explained that the maturity of a Spiritual Assembly cannot be assessed by the regularity of its meetings and the efficiency of its functioning alone. Rather its strength must be measured, to a large extent, by the vitality of the spiritual and social life of the community it serves – a growing community that welcomes the constructive contributions of both those who are formally enrolled and those who are not. It is gratifying to see that current approaches, methods and instruments are providing the means for Local Spiritual Assemblies, even those newly formed, to fulfil these responsibilities as they set about to ensure that the requirements of the Five Year Plan are adequately met in their localities. Indeed, the Assembly’s proper involvement with the Plan becomes crucial to every attempt to embrace large numbers – itself a requisite for the manifestation of the full range of its powers and capacities.”³

. . . Early on in each locality, the Local Spiritual Assembly comes into existence, and its steady development follows a trajectory parallel with, and intimately tied to, the fledgling process of growth unfolding in the village. And not unlike the evolution of other facets of this process, the development of the Local Assembly can best be understood in terms of capacity building.

What needs to occur in the first instance is relatively straightforward: Individual awareness of the process of growth gathering momentum in the village, born of each member’s personal involvement in the core activities, must coalesce into a collective consciousness that recognizes both the nature of the transformation under way and the obligation of the Assembly to foster it. Without doubt, some attention will have to be given to certain basic administrative functions – for example, meeting with a degree of regularity, conducting the Nineteen Day Feast and planning Holy Day observances, establishing a local fund, and holding annual elections in accordance with Bahá’í principle. However, it should not prove difficult for the Local Assembly to begin,

concomitant with such efforts and with encouragement from an assistant to an Auxiliary Board member, to consult as a body on one or two specific issues with immediate relevance to the life of the community: how the devotional character of the village is being enhanced through the efforts of individuals who have completed the first institute course; how the spiritual education of the children is being addressed by teachers raised up by the institute; how the potential of junior youth is being realized by the program for their spiritual empowerment; how the spiritual and social fabric of the community is being strengthened as the friends visit one another in their homes. As the Assembly consults on such tangible matters and learns to nurture the process of growth lovingly and patiently, its relationship with the Area Teaching Committee and the training institute gradually becomes cemented in a common purpose. But, of still greater importance, it will begin to lay the foundations on which can be built that uniquely affectionate and genuinely supportive relationship, described by the beloved Guardian in many of his messages, which Local Spiritual Assemblies should establish with the individual believer.

Clearly, learning to consult on specific issues related to the global Plan, no matter how crucial, represents but one dimension of the capacity-building process in which the Local Spiritual Assembly must engage. Its continued development implies adherence to the injunction laid down by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that “discussions must all be confined to spiritual matters that pertain to the training of souls, the instruction of children, the relief of the poor, the help of the feeble throughout all classes in the world, kindness to all peoples, the diffusion of the fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Holy Word.” Its steady advancement requires an unbending commitment to promote the best interests of the community and a vigilance in guarding the process of growth against the forces of moral decay that threaten to arrest it. Its ongoing progress calls for a sense of responsibility that extends beyond the circle of friends and families engaged in the core activities to encompass the entire population of the village. And sustaining its gradual maturation is unshakable faith in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s assurance that He will enfold every Spiritual Assembly within the embrace of His care and protection.

Associated with this rise in collective consciousness is the Assembly’s growing ability to properly assess and utilize resources, financial and otherwise, both in support of community activities and in discharging its administrative functions, which may in time include the judicious appointment of



BAHÁ'Í ELECTIONS

committees and the maintenance of modest physical facilities for its operations. No less vital is its ability to nurture an environment conducive to the participation of large numbers in unified action and to ensure that their energies and talents contribute towards progress. In all these respects, the spiritual well-being of the community remains uppermost in the Assembly's mind. And when inevitable problems arise, whether in relation to some activity or among individuals, they will be addressed by a Local Spiritual Assembly which has so completely gained the confidence of the members of the community that all naturally turn to it for assistance. This implies that the Assembly has learned through experience how to help the believers put aside the divisive ways of a partisan mindset, how to find the seeds of unity in even the most perplexing and thorny situations and how to nurture them slowly and lovingly, upholding at all times the standard of justice.

As the community grows in size and in capacity to maintain vitality, the friends will, we have indicated in the past, be drawn further into the life of society and be challenged to take advantage of the approaches they have developed to respond to a widening range of issues that face their village. The question of coherence, so essential to the growth achieved thus far, and so fundamental to the Plan's evolving framework for action, now assumes new dimensions. Much will fall on the Local Assembly, not as an executor of projects but as the voice of moral authority, to make certain that, as the friends strive to apply the teachings of the Faith to improve conditions through a process of action, reflection and consultation, the integrity of their endeavours is not compromised.

Our Ridván message described a few of the characteristics of social action at the grassroots, and the conditions it must meet. Efforts in a village will generally begin on a small scale, perhaps with the emergence of groups of friends, each concerned with a specific social or economic need it has identified and each pursuing a simple set of appropriate actions. Consultation at the Nineteen Day Feast creates a space for the growing social consciousness of the community to find constructive expression. Whatever the nature of activities undertaken, the Local Assembly must be attentive to potential pitfalls and help the friends, if necessary, to steer past them – the allurements of overly ambitious projects that would consume energies and ultimately prove untenable, the temptation of financial grants that would necessitate a departure from Bahá'í principle, the promises of technologies deceptively packaged that would strip the village of its cultural heritage and lead to

fragmentation and dissonance. Eventually the strength of the institute process in the village, and the enhanced capabilities it has fostered in individuals, may enable the friends to take advantage of methods and programs of proven effectiveness, which have been developed by one or another Bahá'í-inspired organization and which have been introduced into the cluster at the suggestion of, and with support from, our Office of Social and Economic Development. Moreover, the Assembly must learn to interact with social and political structures in the locality, gradually raising consciousness of the presence of the Faith and the influence it is exerting on the progress of the village.

What is outlined in the foregoing paragraphs represents only a few of the attributes which Local Spiritual Assemblies in the many villages of the world will gradually develop in serving the needs of communities that embrace larger and larger numbers. As they increasingly manifest their latent capacities and powers, their members will come to be seen by the inhabitants of each village as “the trusted ones of the Merciful among men.” Thus will these Assemblies become “shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and the lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From them the spirit of life streameth in every direction.”

Such a lofty vision applies equally, of course, to all Local Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world. Even in a major metropolitan area, the nature of an Assembly's development is fundamentally the same as the one delineated above. Differences lie principally in size and diversity of the population. The first necessitates the division of the Assembly's area of jurisdiction into neighbourhoods according to the exigencies of growth and the gradual introduction of mechanisms for administering the affairs of the Faith in each. The second requires the Assembly to become familiar with the myriad social spaces, beyond geographic ones, in which segments of the population come together and to offer them, to the extent possible, the wisdom enshrined in the teachings. Further, the institutional structures in an urban area – social, political, and cultural – with which the Assembly must learn to engage are much wider in range and larger in number.⁴

References:

- 1 Shoghi Effendi, cited by the Universal House of Justice, 25 March 2007 to the Bahá'ís of the world
- 2 The Universal House of Justice, 25 March 2007, to the Bahá'ís of the World
- 3 The Universal House of Justice, Ridván 2010 message to the Bahá'ís of the world
- 4 The Universal House of Justice, 28 December 2010, to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counsellors



Bahá'u'lláh's Marriage Law

“And when He desired to manifest grace and beneficence to men, and to set the world in order, He revealed observances and created laws; among them He established the law of marriage, made it as a fortress for well-being and salvation, and enjoined it upon us in that which was sent down out of the heaven of sanctity in His Most Holy Book.”

Bahá'u'lláh, Baha'i Prayers, p. 103

Among the laws Bahá'u'lláh has revealed for the well-being and happiness of humankind is that of marriage. The purpose of this great law is:

“to strengthen the social fabric, to knit closer the ties of the home, to place a certain gratitude and respect in the hearts of children for those who have given them life and sent their souls out on the eternal journey towards their Creator.”

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 25 October 1947

Bahá'u'lláh's marriage law enjoins upon believers certain specific requirements. Each and every couple marrying under Bahá'í law must ensure that these requirements are met to enjoy the spiritual benefit of obedience to Bahá'u'lláh's law. It is also important to remember that Bahá'ís who intentionally disregard the marriage law are subject to the possible loss of their administrative rights.

A Bahá'í wedding cannot take place until the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will be held has verified that all requirements of both Bahá'í and civil law have been met. The following overview of Bahá'í marriage law is offered to ensure that the friends are aware of the requirements.

The first condition is that the couple must freely choose each other as marriage partners

Parental consent

According to Bahá'u'lláh's Marriage Law, except under very specific circumstances which must be considered by the National Spiritual Assembly on a case by case basis, all living natural parents of the intended marriage partners, whether Bahá'ís or not, must freely give their consent to the marriage.

“The validity of a Bahá'í marriage is dependent upon the free and full consent of all four parents. The freedom of the parents in the exercise of this right is unrestricted and unconditioned. They may refuse their consent on any ground, and they are responsible for their decision to God alone.”

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 19 March 1938

Under certain circumstances, parental consent is not required, these circumstances include:

If the child was adopted in Canada. For cases of adoption in other countries, please consult with the authorizing Assembly.

If the parent has absented himself to a degree that he can be deemed legally dead. In such cases, full details of the matter should be forwarded by the authorizing Assembly to the National Assembly for guidance.

If the parent is assessed as legally incompetent to give consent.

Any questions regarding the requirement for parental consent under special circumstances should be directed to the authorizing Assembly for guidance.

Under certain extraordinary circumstances, the Universal House of Justice has decided that the requirement for parental consent may be waived by the National Spiritual Assembly on a case by case basis. Questions about the particular circumstances of this process should be addressed to the Local Spiritual Assembly, which should in turn raise the question with the National Assembly.

Bahá'í marriages must be authorized by the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will take place

The Local Spiritual Assembly in the locality where the marriage ceremony is taking place authorizes the marriage. Without the authorization of the appropriate Local Assembly, a Bahá'í marriage is not recognized as valid under Bahá'í law, even if the vow is recited. If there is no Spiritual Assembly in the locality where the wedding is to take place, the couple may seek authorization from a nearby Spiritual Assembly.



BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S MARRIAGE LAW

In good standing and free to marry

For a Bahá'í to have a Bahá'í marriage ceremony, (s)he must be in good standing; in other words, s(he) must have her/his administrative rights.

To marry under Bahá'í law, both individuals must be free to marry.

In cases where one of the couple is not a Bahá'í, a valid civil marriage license is sufficient evidence that the person is free to marry, except in the province of Quebec, where no civil marriage license is required. Spiritual Assemblies authorizing a marriage in the province of Quebec are responsible to determine that a civil divorce has been obtained in the case of a previously married person who is not a Bahá'í and who wishes to re-marry.

In the case of a Bahá'í who has previously been married, (s)he is required to present to the authorizing Assembly a copy of the letter from the National Spiritual Assembly advising her/him that her/his Bahá'í divorce has been finalized. Should a copy of this letter from the National Spiritual Assembly be unavailable, the Assembly should raise the matter directly with the Department of the Secretariat of the National Assembly.

“Even though a Bahá'í has obtained a civil divorce, under Bahá'í law he cannot be regarded as divorced unless he has also obtained a Bahá'í divorce, therefore he is not free to marry. Should he attempt to marry and in the process violate the Bahá'í law governing marriage, he is, of course, subject to sanction.”

From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 13 February 1975

95 Day engagement period

According to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, the period of engagement prior to the wedding should be no more than 95 days. However, the laws regarding the 95 day period of engagement have not yet been made applicable to non-Persian believers. These laws are binding on Persian believers, wherever they reside, if both parties to the marriage are Persian. This law is not applicable, however, if one of the parties is not a Persian believer.

The beginning of the 95 day engagement period is the day on which the parental consents have been obtained.

Any request for an extension of the engagement period beyond 95 days should be brought to the authorizing Assembly and can only occur with the approval of the National Spiritual Assembly. Should the authorizing Assembly decide that circumstances may warrant an extension of the 95 day engagement period, all relevant details of the matter should be forwarded by the authorizing Assembly to the National Assembly.

Dowry

According to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, marriage is conditioned on payment of a dowry. However the laws regarding the dowry have not yet been made applicable to believers who are not Persian. These laws are binding on Persian believers, wherever they reside, if both members of the couple are Persian. When a non-Persian believer is involved, the laws applicable only to Persians are not binding, but the couple is free to follow such laws as they wish.

Guidance regarding calculation of the dowry can be found in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas.

The Bahá'í marriage ceremony

“As you know, there is no ritual, according to the Aqdas, and the Guardian is very anxious that none should be introduced at present and no general forms accepted. He believes this ceremony should be as simple as possible, the parties using the words ordained by Bahá'u'lláh, and excerpts from the Writings and Prayers being read if desired. There should be no commingling of the old forms with the new and simple one of Bahá'u'lláh . . .”

From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 13 March 1944

Vows

The couple themselves perform the marriage ceremony by each saying, in the presence of at least two witnesses, the verse prescribed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, ‘We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God.’

Witnesses

The marriage ceremony must be witnessed by two trustworthy individuals, approved by the authorizing Assembly, whose testimony is deemed acceptable. It is not necessary that the witnesses be Bahá'ís. An Assembly may not accept as witnesses anyone under the age legislated by the province or territory as the age of majority.



BAHÁ'U'LLÁH'S MARRIAGE LAW

“The witnesses can be any two trustworthy people whose testimony is acceptable to the Spiritual Assembly under whose jurisdiction the marriage is performed. This fact makes it possible for a lone pioneer in a remote post to have a Bahá'í marriage.”

From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, dated 8 August 1969.

Ceremonies other than the Bahá'í ceremony

In all provinces, the Bahá'í marriage ceremony is legally recognized. It is not necessary, therefore, to have an additional civil ceremony. The Territories do not recognize Bahá'í marriage and, therefore, couples marrying in the Territories are required to have both a Bahá'í marriage ceremony and a civil ceremony.

When two Bahá'ís marry, they must not be married by the religious ceremony of another faith.

An additional ceremony is permitted, as, for example, in the case of a Bahá'í marrying someone of another faith and ceremonies from both religions are performed, provided that:

The Bahá'í ceremony must be carried out before or after the non-Bahá'í one, on the same day. The 24-hour period within which the ceremonies must be held begins at 12:01 a.m. of the day in which the first ceremony is held and concludes at midnight of that same day.

Equal respect must be accorded to both ceremonies. In other words, the Bahá'í ceremony, which is basically so simple, should not be regarded as a mere formal adjunct to the ceremony of the other religion.

The two ceremonies must be clearly distinct. In other words, they should not be commingled into one combined ceremony.

The Bahá'í participating in the non-Bahá'í religious ceremony does not make a declaration of Faith in the other religion.

International marriages in Canada

In cases of marriage in Canada to a Bahá'í from another country, the intended spouse should arrange

for their National Spiritual Assembly to send confirmation of his or her Bahá'í status, as well as marital status, to our National Spiritual Assembly. This information will then be provided to the Local Spiritual Assembly authorizing the marriage.

Marriages outside of Canada

As civil marriage requirements differ from country to country, couples planning to marry in a country other than Canada are advised to contact the National Spiritual Assembly in the country where the wedding is to take place for guidance as to how best to proceed. These National Assemblies should be given as much notice as possible in order for them to assist the authorizing Local Assembly in facilitating the couple's plans. The Records Department at the National Centre can provide information on how best to contact any National Spiritual Assembly.

Canadian Bahá'ís planning to marry outside of Canada should contact the Records Department for international Bahá'í credentials, which they will be required to present to the Bahá'í institution authorizing their marriage.

Once a marriage has taken place outside of Canada, the couple must provide both Bahá'í and civil marriage certificates (where applicable) to the Records Department at the National Centre

Marriages in Iran

Kindly contact the Department of the Secretariat of the National Spiritual Assembly at secretariat@cdnbnc.org for the most recent guidance regarding marriage in Iran.

“When, therefore, the people of Bahá undertake to marry, the union must be a true relationship, a spiritual coming together as well as a physical one, so that throughout every phase of life, and in all the worlds of God, their union will endure; for this real oneness is a gleaming out of the love of God.”

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 117



Minister Baird visits the Bahá'í World Centre



Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird visited the Bahá'í World Centre in early February. Minister Baird has spoken up many times for the Bahá'í community around the world, including while addressing the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Baird used this opportunity to speak with Albert Lincoln, Secretary-General of the Bahá'í International Community, about the importance of religious freedom in emerging democracies and how Canada can continue to be a staunch advocate for these freedoms. □

Canadian Senators condemn the Iranian regime for its egregious abuse of human rights

Continuous human rights abuses in Iran have urged another series of debates in the Senate of Canada. The latest inquiry was initiated by Senator Linda Frum in early February, followed by two sessions in mid-February. Reference to Bahá'í prisoners of conscience was made by Senators Salma Ataullahjan, Doug Finley, Percy Mockler, Michael MacDonald, Roméo Dallaire, Maria Chaput, and Mobina Jaffer.

Referring to “unlawfully held” prisoners, Senator Frum in her remarks noted that, “currently three Canadians [are] being held in Iran’s notorious Evin Prison, a grotesquely cruel and inhumane chamber of horrors. Like so many other innocent victims of the Iranian regime, these men have been subjected to beatings, physical and psychological torture and the denial of medical treatment in jail. They have been denied the right to a free and fair trial, and their lives are in grave danger.”

She emphasized that the case of Saeed Malekpour – a Canadian-Iranian Bahá'í who was sentenced to death in 2010 – must be dealt with “greatest urgency” as “he lives each day with the prospect of imminent execution.”

“The Islamic Republic of Iran,” Senator Frum continued, “has the distinction of holding the world’s highest record for public hangings and executions” that “are typically carried out in an especially cruel and sadistic manner. Systematic arrests, lengthy imprisonments and torture are regular occurrences in Iran. Human rights activists and members of



The Senate of Canada. Photo: Library of Parliament

ethnic minority groups are among the regime’s favourite targets.”

Senator Jaffer, who in December 2011 had made a statement about the persecution of Bahá'í educators in Iran, joined her colleague to speak about systematic unjust persecution and detention of “prisoners of conscience” in “unspeakable conditions.”

From arrests without warrant to the courts’ refusal to issue written judgment,” she said, “the legal process makes a mockery of justice. Prisoners are held in crowded conditions, lacking adequate sanitation,



daylight, clean water, exercise and fresh air, and also may be denied access to the necessary level of medical care.”

“Some have no beds and must sleep on concrete floors. Prisoners who complain about the conditions are beaten. Routinely, prisoners are separated from their parents, spouses and/or children by a glass partition during their infrequent and very short family visits.”

Recalling her own experience in Uganda when her husband was brutally taken from their home, Senator Jaffer drew a parallel with arrests and the constant fear of being unjustifiably arrested in Iran. She addressed the Senate:

“There is no fear worse in this world than the knock of authorities who come to take your loved ones – loved ones who want to change conditions of their citizens.”

Senator Dallaire extensively spoke about the continuous persecution of the Bahá’ís of Iran, who “live under the heavy boot of tyranny.”

“We here are not unfamiliar with the oppression of the Bahá’ís in Iran. We know, thanks in part to the inquiry of Senator Jaffer last year, that its members have historically suffered discrimination, including the denial of employment, the denial of higher education, and a long-standing media campaign of vilification, an item I will expand upon later. The Bahá’ís have been and continue to be subjected to brutal raids, arbitrary arrests and torture. Most alarming is the exponential level of incarceration rates among this group.”

He stressed that the Iranian regime’s strategy to demonize the Bahá’ís through media will put

the 300,000 members of the Bahá’í community of Iran “in danger of extermination.”

“This is the same strategy that has been used many times by repressive societies determined to eliminate an enemy population, a population that they consider subversive. History has shown that the incessant and systematic repetition of lies and the creation of myths can instill hatred in the majority and that this hatred can translate into violence against a visible minority. Rwanda is just one example where this concept was put into practice; Darfur is another, where this is still happening.”

In her address to the Senate, Senator Chaput praised the courage of the Bahá’í community of Iran to peacefully endure their persecution.

“This peaceful community,” she said, “has been persecuted since its earliest days in Iran; lately, however, the persecution looks more like an official state-orchestrated policy.” She referred to the 1993 memorandum that still serves as the key persecution policy of the Bahá’ís.

“The memorandum provides explicit instructions designed to impede the progress and development of the Baha’i community. This includes officially prohibiting all members of this community from accessing higher education and certain types of employment. People are therefore being denied admission to university simply because they belong to a specific community. This discriminatory policy is systematically applied by the Iranian authorities.”

In their concluding remarks, the senators called for immediate release of all “unlawfully incarcerated prisoners of conscience” that includes more than 100 Bahá’ís. □

Education Under Fire premiere sets a process in motion

The film *Education Under Fire* premiered at Concordia University in late January. Students, faculty and several campus clubs came together to engage in conversations and action to support Iranian students denied access to higher education based on ideological or religious reasons.

The audience viewed the powerful 30 minute documentary, and participated in an engaging discussion with a cross-section of students about follow-up action they could take on campus and beyond.

Highlights of the premiere included articles written by campus papers, support and involvement by Journalists for Human Rights, Amnesty International Concordia and Montreal, and Concordia University TV. There was outstanding support from numerous professors and hundreds of students.

The project centred around the film *Education Under Fire* has inspired individuals at Simon Fraser, UBC, Carleton, the University of Toronto and Dalhousie, among others, to plan events and set in motion a process the intensity of which appears to



Alexandra Hanson, left, Greg Newing, and Tanya Hanson at an *Education Under Fire* event at Concordia University in Montreal, Que.

be increasing each day.

Those involved in the organization of the campaign have indicated it is simple to organize whether it takes place at a university, college, high school, or community. The organized structure of the campaign, the experience already acquired, and the support network in place will all assist individuals in the process of organizing an event.

For more than 30 years, Bahá'ís in Iran have been systematically persecuted for their beliefs and have been blocked from entering any institution to obtain higher education. In 1987, the Iranian Bahá'í community started an informal university called the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE).

On 21 May 2011 the government launched an attack against this effort, raiding homes, confiscating material, and arresting 18 professors and administrators, seven of whom were sentenced to four to five years of prison.

Education Under Fire addresses the Iranian government's denial of the right to education for ideological and religious reasons. Beyond the goal of encouraging specific action to mitigate the effects of these policies in Iran, the *Education Under Fire* campaign encourages conversations on university campuses and in communities around the country to shine a light on the importance of defending Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees education as an inalienable right of every human being.

The campaign is centred around a few key components: a letter written by two Nobel Laureates, Reverend Desmond Tutu and President José Ramos-Horta of East Timor, as well as the *Education Under Fire* documentary.

The letter expresses the Laureates' alarm at the deteriorating situation of the Iranian Bahá'ís and

highlights action individuals can take in response to the situation including: calling on the Iranian government to drop the charges and release BIHE educators who have been imprisoned, and to have academic leaders voice their concern and opposition to the denial of higher education.

The campaign also features an open letter on the *Education Under Fire* website which individuals, in a minute or two, can send, in support of BIHE students, to key Iranian officials. The goal of the campaign is to engage 25,000 individuals in taking that action. These features of the campaign are just the beginning. As more become engaged and excitement is generated, the opportunities are endless. A few ideas include: reaching out to professors and administrators on this issue, presenting the subject in classrooms and purchasing the DVD kit to host smaller follow-up screenings.

The campaign is operating under the authority of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada. The national coordinator for the campaign, Donna Hakimian, is available to offer support in planning an event, as is Shana Sobhani of the Office of External Affairs.

They may be reached at <donna@educationunderfire.com> or <ssobhani@cdnbnc.org.> Visit the *Education Under Fire* website for detailed information, videos, and a link to the Nobel Laureates letter at <<http://educationunderfire.com>> □

Canadian professors speak out for Iran's Bahá'ís

The CAUT Bulletin (Canadian Association of University Teachers) published an article in February entitled "Iran Jails Bahá'í Educators, Calling Their Canadian Degrees Illegal" written by 12 Canadian university professors outlining the history of the Bahá'í Institute for Higher Education (BIHE), the May 2011 Iranian government raids on the BIHE and the action that had been taken to support the imprisoned educators and youth who were denied access to higher education in Iran, including the *Education Under Fire* campaign.

The lead to the article was mentioned on the front page of the publication and the article had excellence placement on page two. CAUT has more than 66,000 members from the academic community. □

Lloyd Axworthy and Allan Rock: “Canadians can help stop the persecution of Iran’s Bahá’ís”

Two pre-eminent Canadians, Lloyd Axworthy, President of the University of Winnipeg and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Allan Rock, President of the University of Ottawa and former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations and federal cabinet minister, have published an eloquent appeal on behalf of the Bahá’ís of Iran.

Under the title “Canadians Can Help Stop the Persecution of Iran’s Bahá’ís,” they write of how “deeply troubled” they are that Bahá’ís are denied access to university, and express concern that “the brutal regime in Tehran has turned a deaf ear” to the calls to end “systematic persecution of Bahá’ís.”

“Canada,” they write, “has an important and enduring connection to this vulnerable group. Some 30 years ago, several thousand Bahá’í refugees fled Iran to make Canada their home, settling in every province and territory and becoming proud and contributing Canadians.”

“There are now more than 30,000 Canadians of the Bahá’í faith from many different backgrounds who have enriched our country by their citizenship. Following the Iranian Revolution, the Canadian Government took steps at the United Nations and elsewhere to defend the rights of the Bahá’ís in Iran. Successive Canadian Governments have continued that leadership by sponsoring annual resolutions at the United Nations condemning Iran for its oppressive and inhumane policies.”



Allan Rock, left and Lloyd Axworthy. Photo: Bahá’í World News Service

Noting that “a growing group of academics, university administrators and notable advocates for peace including Desmond Tutu, Romeo Dallaire and Jose Ramos-Horta are condemning the Iranian regime’s denial of the right to education,” Presidents Axworthy and Rock close their commentary: “We are proud to join them and we encourage all Canadians to add their voice in calling on the Iranian government unconditionally to drop all charges against educators, to halt all further aggression towards the Bahá’í Institute for Higher Education and to allow the Bahá’í access to education. The Bahá’ís of Iran must know that in resisting the cruel oppression of those who persecute them, they do not stand alone.” □

World Religion Day celebrated

Mayor Jim Watson was on hand at City Hall in early January to proclaim World Religion Day in Ottawa, Ont.

“The city of Ottawa has a long standing commitment to the development of a diverse society in which the achievements, cultural heritage, and religious conviction of all citizens is recognized and respected,” the proclamation read.

The event featured Louise Profeit-LeBlanc, member of the Nacho N’yak Dun First Nation from Mayo in north eastern Yukon, who spoke on the theme of water in spiritual traditions, and that the wise management of all the natural resources of the



Ottawa, Ont., Mayor Jim Watson reads the World Religion Day proclamation.



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Master of ceremonies Waubgeshig Rice, CBC broadcast journalist and writer, and Afsoon Houshidari, member of the organizing committee.

planet, including water, will require a global approach governed by spiritual principles of justice and equity, and the fundamental concept of moderation.

The family-oriented celebration included music from the Women's Drumming Circle, Christ Church Cathedral Ottawa Choir of Men and Boys, The Tamir Neshama Choir, the Ismaili Muslim Community, and the Sikh community.

World Religion Day was established in 1950 to bring attention to the harmony of the spiritual principles of every religion and religion's role in the fostering of resilient, vital and nurturing communities at the local and global level. This year marks the 12th annual celebration of World Religion Day in Ottawa, with members of many of Ottawa's faith groups coming together to mark the event.

A group in Sturgeon Falls, Ont., on the other hand, recently hosted their first ever World Religion Day. The event featured a panel presentation and discussion from different religious perspectives on 'what it means to be a good neighbour.'

"We know that even in West Nipissing we have people who follow many different faiths. Sometimes



Performers at the 2012 World Religion Day with the Ottawa Mayor and City Councillors.



The participants in this annual celebration sat in two large concentric circles, with the master of ceremonies Waubgeshig Rice, keynote speaker Louise Profeit-Leblanc, and performers all as different parts of the circle. "The power of the circle allows the heart to be shared with each other," said Ms. Profeit-Leblanc.

faith is also associated with race and culture. This effort is about eliminating all forms of prejudice, through education, and inviting the people with the knowledge to educate us," said Lana Richardson, the event's chief organizer.

"Historically religion is seen by many as being the source of troubles between people. But, in fact, religious teachings are always about love and caring, about justice and truth. We want to focus on the core teachings of a religion or spiritual tradition, so people can see that we are all speaking a similar language." □

Photos: Louis Brunet

Bahá'í youth win international faith film contest

Four youth in Guelph, Ontario have been recognized for an effort to make a positive change in the world through a musical video.

In December 2011, the Tony Blair Faith Foundation gave their group's video, *Be the Change You Want to See*, the award for best musical video and best overall submission to the international Faith Shorts video competition.

The "Dapper Rappers," Nadim Merrikh, Shayan Majidy, Sahba Shahmohamadloo, and Blair Cameron, who deepened their friendship through the junior youth program, created a few rap videos for the web based on inspirational people from the history of the Bahá'í Faith.

The encouraging feedback from their first videos gave them confidence to sport their signature hats, sunglasses, and ties while 'busting rhymes' at various sites in Guelph. The final result was their award-winning video submission that calls for personal action, not just words, for the positive changes needed in society.

"I first heard about the Tony Blair Faith Foundation video contest when Sahba told me about it," said Merrikh, the group's producer behind the winning video who also happens to be their youngest member at age 15. "I found out the video was shortlisted while in Germany. This was very exciting news; even that we were finalists was a big accomplishment for me."

The Faith Shorts film competition aims to give youth the opportunity to express their faith in their own words through three-minute films. The categories for 2011 were family, music, and action. Finalists were



Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and actor Omid Djalili who is also a member of the Bahá'í community pose with Nadim Merrikh of Guelph, Ontario at the Tony Blair Faith Foundation award ceremony. Photo: James Perrin

chosen from hundreds of submissions from around the world that were then reviewed by a panel of judges from various faith and celebrity backgrounds such as actors Hugh Jackman, Jet Li, Rabbi David Rosen, Muslim television preacher Amr Khaled and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

While the Dapper Rappers were excited with their awards, they admit that all the finalists' submissions were well done and, therefore, they really can't say for certain how theirs became the judges' top pick.



"It is hard to determine exactly why the video won," said Shahmohammadloo. "The message of the video simply calls for each individual to think about how they can achieve pure and goodly deeds in their life, and how their personal life could induce transformation in their society. Such a statement truly resonates with anybody of faith or no faith."

Given the social movements and calls for change throughout the world in 2011, the underlying message of *Be the Change You Want to See* appears to be somewhat of an anthem for today's youth. While some news interviewers have asked whether the song identifies with specific, recent events, the Dapper Rappers are careful to point out that inspiration for the song came through a general recognition of youths' potential.

"At the forefront of all these protests and movements were youth," said Shahmohammadloo. "This inspired us to feel we have a voice and could creatively and maturely share a message with the world."

And their own youthful power is evident in the fact that the entire video was written and shot in a single weekend. It's not surprising, then, that Cameron names "time" as the greatest challenge for the video's creation.

"We had put aside a weekend for the project where we were to . . . find a backing track, write the lyrics, record the song, and film the music video," said Cameron. But the pressure of time didn't take away from any fun they had in the process.

"It was amazing - we were running around the city of Guelph, looking for locations, hoping against hope it wouldn't rain. Because we had just written the lyrics the previous day, none of us had them

memorized, so we wrote each verse on the whiteboard, and held it behind the camera while filming. Then Nadim took all the footage and edited it all together. It was great!"

For Merrikh, the intensity provided the energy needed to turn their ideas into action.

"Our video started with a small idea and with one weekend of focused, hard work we came up with a winning video," said Merrikh. "When you gather together and have a common purpose, being that you want to help change the world in some way, having that collectiveness and diversity of thoughts is truly inspiring and motivating to keep going."

The group is especially looking forward to using the part of their award that includes having a professional crew to make and edit their next film. Still, the Dapper Rappers make it clear that their greatest prize was, and remains, the bond of friendship they built through the study of the Bahá'í Writings, meaningful conversations and service to the community. Three of the four Dapper Rappers have volunteered with younger youth to help build their capacity to serve their community and one of their future projects includes a video featuring the junior youth programs' benefits.

"My greatest aspiration for the future is to see every young person be able to participate in the junior youth program that has done so much for me and my friends to raise our capacity, and raise our awareness of who we really are and what we're capable to do," said Majidy.

"Change is not passive, and never will be, and you can't truly change yourself unless you begin changing your environment." □

Parliament Hill interfaith breakfast focuses on freedom of belief

Some 150 people of faith, Members of Parliament, senators and ambassadors participated in the Third Annual Interfaith National Breakfast in late November. The breakfast was organized under the leadership of co-chairs David Sweet, Member of Parliament, and Rabbi Reuven Bulka of the All Party Interfaith Friendship Group (APIF).

This year the gathering focused on the theme of the "Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion



Participants in the Parliament Hill interfaith breakfast in Ottawa.
Photo: Louis Brunet



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or Belief,” signed 30 years ago, and a matter of renewed interest in light of the federal government’s plan to establish an Office of Religious Freedom.

MP Mario Silva, the keynote speaker, addressed those at the breakfast as “citizens of God’s earth.”

“Religious intolerance is unquestionably a major factor in global instability,” he noted. “Freedom of religion as outlined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 also involves the freedom to leave or change one’s religion – in religious terms called apostasy. This does not, however, appear in the 1981 declaration. Due to pressure from dissenting states, UN treaties have used weaker language to define this right . . .”

Mr. Sweet noted that as many as one billion people worldwide are the victims of discrimination, persecution and oppression linked to their religious beliefs. “Religious intolerance does not affect only those at whom it is directly aimed; it tears at the soul of all humanity.”

Speaking about the importance of courage, compassion, understanding and acceptance, he

explained that the United Nations Declaration defines the need for a universal global effort to challenge the face of religious intolerance irrespective of the cost. After all, Mr. Silva reminded everyone, the universal teachings of all religions call on us to love God and love all human beings.

Mr. Sweet, chairing the breakfast, pointed out that religious freedom was central to other rights and freedoms, including the right of expression and assembly, and invited Susanne E. Tamás, Director of the Office of Government Relations of the Bahá’í Community of Canada, to explain the importance of the Declaration.

“It is not something we should take for granted,” said Ms. Tamás. “We must treasure it for its contribution to the well-being of the community.”

“Canada [is at] the leading edge of combating intolerance and is able to draw on its diversity,” she noted, drawing attention to the fact that religion creates social capacity in all of us. □

Winter retreat focuses on Covenant

The Clearwater, B.C. Bahá’í group held a “Bahá’í Winter Retreat” for all of the Thompson-Nicola Region in early January in Clearwater, B.C. on the theme of The Covenant of Bahá’u’lláh. Keynote speakers were Doris Bruno and MJ Oaks.

Everyone else who attended participated in presenting a 10-20 minute theme on the Covenant in an artistic way.

In the snowy mountains, the energy created was enough to melt everyone’s hearts as we learned of Bahá’u’lláh’s travels and exiles, the beloved Centre of the Covenant Abdu’l-Bahá, and the dear Guardian Shoghi Effendi. Also, heroic teachers of the Cause and the devoted Hands of the Cause were discussed.

The backgrounds of the family and friends represented at the retreat were diverse: First Nations, Chinese, Persian, African, and Canadian.

For the very first time, a one hour session on Huqúq’u’lláh was successfully presented to the group via skype with Right of God representative Ninous Mogharrabi Ashraf from Kelowna, B.C.

The Bahá’í Unity Centre Bookstore from Quesnel provided books on the theme of the Covenant for sale, which was wonderful to have throughout the weekend.



A puppet show at the winter retreat in Clearwater B.C. The puppet show was followed by a bonfire and fellowship with Bahá’ís and their friends and families living in Clearwater.

Each morning started with dawn prayers by candle-light and song. There were ample opportunities for service, whether it was helping with meals, cleaning up, or bringing in chopped firewood. Everyone expressed how much fun the weekend was and came away with a more personal attachment to and understanding of the Covenant. □

– Ron & Shauna Plamodon



Canadian Bahá'í student among winners of a tournament

Kayvon Razzaghi of Brandon, Man. was one among four winners of the Innovate Canada Tournament run by the Canadian Youth Business Foundation for 2011 and announced in late December.

The team of four invented the "Grow Mugs Project" which used personalized recycled mugs to grow herbs and teach children about plants and healthy eating. □

Interfaith work advances

In the fall, a Bahá'í spoke at an interfaith conference at a Red Deer Alta. college on gender equality and women's role in religion. This presentation led to further opportunities including giving presentations on the Bahá'í Faith at a Christian university in the area and a local United Church. □

– Mavis Edey



This is a gathering at the home of Andy and Mitra Knight that attracted about 50 youth from the Edmonton and St. Albert, Alta. area in January. The youth were delighted to welcome Dr. Redwan Moqbel who spoke about the role of the Bahá'ís in the wider community and the importance of participating in the Five Year Plan. It was a terrific evening on one of the coldest days of the year in Edmonton.

Several Ottawa, Ont. Bahá'ís who attended the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Bahá'í House of Worship of New Delhi, India this past November with a large photo of the famous *Incredible India* bus ad in Ottawa.





New crackdown highlights campaign to block progress of Iranian Bahá'ís

The Iranian government's systematic strategy to drive Bahá'ís to economic ruin shows no sign of abating.

According to reports received by the Bahá'í International Community, a renewed campaign is under way in Kerman, the major city in south central Iran.

"We have learned that the Public Places Supervision Office is denying the renewal of licenses – and revoking some existing ones – for Bahá'í-owned businesses in the city," said Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations.

"A wide range of professions are being targeted – from computer sales and repair shops to real estate brokers. Bahá'ís involved in the sale of iron alloys, steel, or gold are losing their licenses, as are Bahá'í-owned businesses relating to food products, and health and cosmetic services, such as opticians," she said.

Bahá'ís in Kerman have also been told that they are not allowed to own a large number of shops on the same street.

"The authorities have even gone so far as to revoke the licenses of business partners of Bahá'ís, who are

not themselves members of the Bahá'í Faith," said Ms. Dugal.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, many thousands of Bahá'ís have lost their jobs or sources of livelihood. In 1993, the UN disclosed an Iranian government memorandum – endorsed by the country's Supreme Leader – that explicitly outlines a plan to "block" the "development of the Iranian Bahá'í community."

In addition to the barring of young Bahá'ís from higher education, said Ms. Dugal, it is clear that the authorities are continuing with a range of other actions to carry out this policy.

"We have received accounts of at least 60 incidents in the past five years, designed to curb the economic prospects of Bahá'ís," she reported.

"International law firmly spells out the right of individuals to be free to work and earn a livelihood, without discrimination," said Ms. Dugal.

"Last month, the international community voted overwhelmingly at the UN to condemn Iran for its ongoing and recurring human rights violations. Surely it's time that Iran realizes that it can no longer get away with oppressing its citizens and thinking that no one will notice." □



The Shrine of the Báb viewed from the Upper Terraces. Photo: Bahá'í International Community



Groundbreaking documentary exposes century-old Iranian taboo

A feature-length film that examines the persecution of Iran's Bahá'ís opened in a few city centres around the world, including Toronto and Montreal in early March.

Iranian Taboo is the work of celebrated Dutch-Iranian filmmaker Reza Allamehzadeh.

"In spite of the fact that I'm banned from entering my homeland, I managed to film deep inside Iran with the help of devoted friends who risked their lives to film the footage that I needed," said Mr. Allamehzadeh, who is not a Bahá'í.

"I have made several challenging documentaries during my long career as a filmmaker – but none of them was as difficult to make as *Iranian Taboo*," he said.

Starting inside Iran, the film follows the journey of a Bahá'í woman and her 14-year old daughter who decide to sell all of their belongings and leave the country to take refuge in the West.

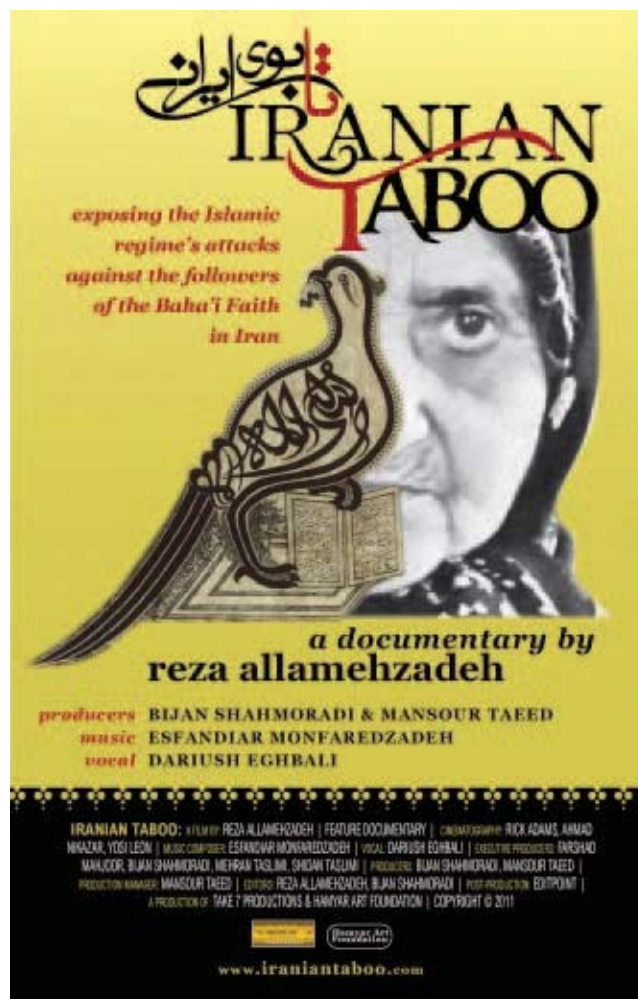
It also shows the efforts that the Iranian Bahá'í community has made to educate its own young members who are barred from higher education and – for the first time – gives a voice to Bahá'í landowners who have suffered prolonged persecution in the village of Ivel in the northern province of Mázandarán.

Mr. Allamehzadeh said he chose to call the film *Iranian Taboo* because he has found that even those Iranians who believe Bahá'ís should have their human rights remain silent on the matter.

"I should have started making this movie sooner," said Mr. Allamehzadeh. "While I was researching, I realized that all different sectors of society based on their gender, ethnicity, language and religion are under pressure, but Bahá'ís have the highest degree of deprivation – not even their dead are safe and their cemeteries are being attacked. Therefore, my view is to solely focus on the human rights aspect and I wanted to depict how much the rights of Bahá'ís are being violated."

"*Iranian Taboo* is the most personal documentary that I have ever made," he said.

Another breakthrough for the project was securing interviews with Iranian politicians, authors and academics who have rarely spoken publicly about



Iran's "Bahá'í question." Among them, Abolhassan Baniśadr – who served as the first president of Iran after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Also speaking on camera, human rights lawyer and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi questions the barring of Bahá'ís from certain professions. "To work . . . to make an honest living or to get a work permit, to open up a shoe repair shop or a restaurant, you don't have to be a Muslim," says Mrs. Ebadi. "Where in Islam does it say that a shoemaker has to be Muslim?" □



Purity of Heart

Christie and Chen were so excited, their teacher had brought them a special gift that day in children's class. She had just finished telling them a story about a man who had so little, but loved 'Abdu'l-Bahá so much, that he gave 'Abdu'l-Bahá the only thing he had: his dinner. All that was in the dinner was a dried up apple and some old bread, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá was so happy to receive this gift and ate it with the deepest pleasure.

The children watched as their teacher pulled fresh apples out of her bag and cut them into pieces, ensuring there was enough for everyone.

"Each of you can have four pieces of apple, so make sure you count them out!" said their teacher as Christie and Chen rushed to the table along with the rest of the children, eager to taste the sweet apples.

But when they got to the table, there were only two pieces left!

"Hey! That's not fair!" said Chen, looking around the room to find out who might have taken extra pieces. Off in the corner he saw Ben, trying to hide his hands, which were full of so many pieces of apples that he could barely hold them. When Ben saw Christie and Chen coming towards him, he blushed and tried not to look them in the eye.

"Why did you take our pieces Ben?" asked Christie, "Now there isn't enough for everybody!"

"I was really hungry . . ." mumbled Ben, shifting his feet. He held out his hands, offering them to take what he had left. Chen looked and saw that he had already eaten four, and had not yet started onto the pieces belonging to them, so he took them back and handed Christie her share.

Christie looked at the bright red pieces of apple in her hands, and then at Ben, who was staring at the floor. She then handed two of her pieces back to Ben. The three children ate their apples and joined the rest of the class as they washed their hands and got ready to go home.

Before leaving the teacher pulled Christie aside. "That was a very kind thing you did Christie," she said.

"Even though Ben took too much, you forgave him and shared what you had. I have these cards with special words from Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on them, would you like one?"

Christie chose a card and thanked her teacher as she walked out of the classroom. Looking down at the beautiful card she read:

*"O Son of Spirit! My First Counsel is
this: Possess a pure, kindly, and
radiant heart . . ."* (Bahá'u'lláh)



★ STORY PAGE



Let's Reflect

Sit down with someone in your family and read the above story, then ask each other these questions.

1. In the story that the teacher told the class, a man gave 'Abdu'l Bahá his own simple dinner. What spiritual quality did this man show?
2. Why did Ben take more than his share of apples?
3. How was Christie kind to Ben?
4. How did Christie show the quality of having a pure heart?

Activity:

Instead of getting angry at Ben, Christie forgave him – Christie showed the quality of having a pure heart. Draw a picture of someone who has acted in a way that shows a:

Pure heart

Kindly heart

Radiant heart

At the bottom of your picture write a sentence that describes the action.

Our hearts are like a mirror that can reflect the qualities of God. When our heart is filled with anger, and selfishness it cannot be pure, kindly or radiant. Find a small mirror in your house and spread some toothpaste all over the mirror, are you able to see your reflection in this mirror? Now clean this mirror with some water and tissue. Can you see yourself more clearly?

When our heart becomes filled with anger or thoughts only for ourselves, what can we do to clean it?

Write to us

Dear children, we would like to include your art, stories, poetry and reflections in our story page. If you have any artwork, poems or thoughts about purity of heart, send them to us at: bcactivitypage@gmail.com.





Life changes after accepting Faith

Iwould like to retell a wonderful story that happened to our friend Jerry Gacik, a newly declared Bahá'í from St. Catharines, Ont.

His mother in Poland is terminally ill with cancer. Some years ago she and her husband briefly lived in Canada. Unfortunately during that time Jerry and his parents became estranged and did not have any contact with one another for about 28 years. Jerry's parents did not like Canada and moved back to Poland. Life has not been easy for Jerry and his family. They have struggled with illness, a debilitating permanent injury and severe financial hardship. Jerry had not been able to work since his illness.

When he accepted the Faith some months ago, his life and that of his family started to change. Since he is a master craftsman in wood fabrication he agreed to build a large wall unit for one of his Bahá'í friends. The job expanded to also include the replacement of the wood floor and the reconstruction of their fireplace. As payment for his labour he and the friend agreed that it would be fair if they purchased all the necessary tables and power tools for him to do the job. The result of this has been that it has empowered him to look at the opportunity to take on other renovation jobs and it has given him a new outlook on life. Whereas before he viewed life through the eyes of desperation, he can now see a better life for himself and his family.

In the meantime his mother's physical condition in Poland has steadily worsened and he made the decision, with the encouragement of his family and his friends to visit his mother. Although he was apprehensive, since he lacked the necessary funds, he was able to go to Poland on short notice with the financial help of his friends. He booked the very last ticket on the flight to Poland just before Christmas. He was cautioned, prior to his departure, that he should be ready for surprises.

Upon his return he told the friends at our Feast a most surprising tale. When he first arrived, his mother was on the fourth floor in a hospital in Krakow which had no patients on the entire floor except for her. Jerry said the conditions in the hospital were completely appalling. It was dirty everywhere and there was no running water. She was hooked up to IV equipment.

Jerry said she looked very weak and sad with nobody attending to her most basic needs. She brightened up considerably when she saw her son and he spent the rest of that day and the next

looking after her. She was so happy to see him and told him so on several occasions. His apprehension about their reunification had disappeared and even though the circumstances were sad, their reconciliation was a joyful occasion.

He instructed the hospital staff to release his mother and he took her back home in an ambulance. During the following days at home she brightened up considerably. She regained her appetite and they spent some tender time together. He kept a constant vigil and even slept beside her at night. A nurse came and visited daily.

Jerry said he was able to comfort her about death by explaining that her soul, upon passing from this existence, would soar into the next existence and that if we only knew what awaited us in the hereafter we'd all want to swoon away and die. This really gave her hope and her fear of dying was replaced by tranquility.

At that point Jerry's mother made the most remarkable request. She asked that he reach into her purse, where she kept an envelope with pictures and as she showed them to him, one by one, he saw pictures of her as a young girl and several other pictures of himself and of the family. The last picture she showed him was really a postcard and she asked Jerry to say prayers in this very special place she had visited some years back. She told him this beautiful building had given her so much peace.

When he saw the postcard, to his amazement, it was a picture of the House of Worship in Wilmette. What was most remarkable, Jerry said, is that she is and always has been a Catholic and that for her to recognize the sacredness of the House of Worship was a confirmation for him that his decision to accept the Bahá'í Faith had been the right one. When he told his mother that he was a Bahá'í she was not at all surprised. He promised her he would visit the House of Worship and pray for her soul.

This story affected all of us at Feast very deeply and not the least Jerry's wife, Renata and his daughters Jessica and Angelica who had not yet enrolled in the Bahá'í community. The wonderful outcome of this story is that, at a birthday party for Jessica, who recently turned 18, Renata and Jessica both declared their love for Bahá'u'lláh. Angelica at 11 years old is also happy to be part of this wonderful Bahá'í family. □

*Jack Veffer, St. Catharines, Ont.,
from Cluster Niagara Weekly*

Chairperson training travels from Thornhill to Calgary

I wanted to share this story that I thought might be of interest to *Bahá'í Canada* readers: I saw a picture in the November/December issue of *Bahá'í Canada* about a feast chairpersons' skill development workshop held by the Local Spiritual Assembly of Calgary. I found this very interesting as this is an ongoing concern in many Bahá'í communities.

I found the email address of the Bahá'í Council of Alberta in *Bahá'í Canada* and decided to contact them to find the materials used in the chairpersons workshop. Within a day, I received an email from the Local Spiritual Assembly of Calgary with the attached documents. They advised me that some sections in the manual were specifically made to meet the needs of the Calgary community and that there was a significant interactive component to the workshop in Calgary that didn't show up in the document, all this to say that our community should use the materials with caution.

In our email exchange, we both agreed that the Faith is amazing and that we are so blessed for having been given the opportunity to recognize Him and to serve humanity through him. □

Sina Darakhshan, Thornhill, Ont.

Confluence of Centenary events

The Saskatchewan Legislative building celebrates its 100th anniversary in 2012. As you may know, Hand of the Cause of God William Sutherland Maxwell was, along with his brother Edward, one of the architects who designed the building. Isn't it interesting that the building was completed in October of the same year that 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited the Maxwell home in Montreal? □

Bruce Gibson, Saskatoon, Sask.

In Memoriam

Sohrab Azmoudeh, Delta, B.C.

(delayed notice)

Delores Boschman,
North Cowichan, B.C.

Shirley Cridland, Arran-Elderslie, Ont.

Fethiye H Erlik, Ottawa, Ont.

Jay Hershberg, Toronto, Ont.

Norma Holmes, Victoria, B.C.

Williamina MacIssac, Toronto, Ont.

Hugh J Peters, Cowichan Valley E, B.C.
(delayed notice)

Shamsi Rahmani, Toronto, Ont.

Homayoung G Parsiani,
Abbotsford, B.C.

George F Penning, Armstrong, B.C.

Legha Pourmahdi, Richmond Hill, Ont.

Fatemeh Sazegar, Abbotsford, B.C.

Mehrassa Shahir-Khorassani,
Burnaby, B.C.

G. Robert Smith, Hamilton, Ont.

Noreen Scoffield, Trent Hills, Ont.
(delayed notice)

Manoutchehr Shafa'i,
Richmond Hill, Ont.

Mabel Sport, Nanaimo, B.C.

Percy K Tutannuaq,
Baker Lake (Qamani-tuaq), Nunavut

Helen Tobin, Truro, N.S.

Margo Westrheim, Nanaimo, B.C.

Ali Reza Zafari, Newmarket, Ont.

Rahmatu'llah Faridani,
North Vancouver District, B.C.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Persian deepening conference in Germany

A Bahá'í deepening conference in the Persian language focusing on 'Abdu'l-Bahá - Culture and Modernity will take place 24-29 May at the Tambach Seminar Centre, Tambach, Germany.

The conference will be conducted by Dr. Minoo Foadi, Dr. Vahid Rafati, Dr. Shapoor Rassekh, Dr. Nader Saiedi, and Dr. Fereydoun Vahman.

For more details, see <www.tambach.org>.

'Irfán colloquium 2012

'Irfán Colloquia programs include presentations on systematic Bahá'í studies in fundamental principles of the Bahá'í beliefs, the Writings of the Founders of the Faith, and the interface between the Faith and the current intellectual and religious trends as well as the main challenges in human society.

Information about 'Irfán Colloquium and the details of the programs are posted on <www.irfancoolloquia.org>.

'Irfán Colloquia are taking place May 16-20, in Persian and English, Bosch Bahá'í School, Santa Cruz, California; June 23-29 in Persian, and June 30- July 3 in English, Centre for Bahá'í Studies, Acuto, Italy; October 4-7 in Persian and English, Louhelen Bahá'í School, Davison, Michigan; and October 4-7, in German, Tambach Seminar Centre, Tambach, Germany.

Wanted: first-hand accounts of Hands of the Cause

If you have any first-hand accounts of any of the Hands of the Cause, please send them to Mead Simon at <mead@elsewhere.ca> or join the Facebook group "Touched by the Hands."

Both edited and raw versions of the stories are welcome as the focus of the project is on ensuring the stories do not get lost.

It is hoped the stories will be compiled into a volume for publication.

Summer Schools

Ontario's ROBSI Summer School camps are open for registration at www.robsi.ca

The Youth Canoe Trip (for those born 1995-97), is June 30-July 7; Murphy's Point (born 1998-99), is July 8-14; Junior-Senior Camp (born 1999-2004), is July 22-28; Counsellor-in-Training (born 1995-97), is July 22-28.

Departing from the usual dates of previous years, the 2012 Quebec Bahá'í Summer School will be held Saturday, August 18 until Tuesday, August 21.

It will be held again at Camp Val-Notre-Dame in Hérouxville. This year's program will be inspired by the Centenary of the visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Quebec.

Translation volunteers needed

The Bahá'í National Centre has seen a substantial increase in the volume of documents needing to be translated into French or English and is seeking volunteer translators. The volunteers would receive work by email and can therefore work from home.

Requirements and qualifications: Excellent written French or English (or both); reliability; attention to details; access to the Internet; a good understanding of the principles of the Faith, the organization of the community and the Five Year Plan.

Contact: <secretariat@cdnbnc.org>.

مجمع عرفان از غروب 23 تا شامگاه 28 جون 2012 در مركز مطالعات بهائی در اكوٲو، ایتالیا، برگزار میگردد. روز 29 جون به برنامه اختیاری گردش گروهی اختصاص دارد. به هریك از شركت كنندگان يك جلد **سَفینة عرفان** و دفترچه شامل خلاصه سخنرانیها اهدا می شود. هزینه ثبت نام و اقامت و خوراك برای این دوره 320 یورو است. برای برنامه به www.irfancoolloquium.org و برای ثبت نام و ذخیره محل اقامت و ترتیب انتقال از فرودگاه به اكوٲو به: www.centrostudibahai.com مراجعه نمایید

دوازدهمین كنفرانس انجمن معارف بهائی و مطالعات ایرانی در آلمان از ۲۴ الی ۲۹ ماه می ۲۰۱۲ در تامباخ آلمان تشکیل میگردد. موضوع كنفرانس "حضرت عبدالبهاء- تجدد و تمدن (۱۹۱۱-۱۹۲۱)" می باشد كه توسط سخنرانان ارجمند فرح دوستدار، شاپور راسخ، وحید رافقی، نادر سعیدی، مینو فؤادی و فریدون و همن و همچنین هنرمندان منوچهر و همن و سهراب میثاقیان اداره خواهد شد.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Board of Trustees for the Right of God

Further to the announcement of the appointment of the new Board of Trustees for the Right of God serving Canada and Saint Pierre and Miquelon, we are happy to share with you their assignments to the different regions:

Nasrin Neyestani (nasrinneyestani@shaw.ca):
British Columbia and Yukon

Donna Seyed Mahmoud (seyeda@uleth.ca):
Alberta, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan,
Manitoba and Northwest Ontario

Brian Eiriksson (beiriksson@cogeco.ca):
Ontario and Nunavut

Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian (amghadirian@gmail.com):
Quebec and Saint-Pierre and Miquelon

Denis Allard (denislux@rogers.com):
Atlantic Provinces

Travel to Iran

The National Spiritual Assembly no longer requires the friends to request permission to visit Iran. Those planning to make such a trip are urged to contact the National Assembly for current guidance related to their travel. Please include the names and Bahá'í I.D. numbers of those who will be travelling, along with the approximate dates of your trip.

سفر بایران

بنابر تصمیم اخیر محفل روحانی ملی، احباء پس از این موظف به کسب اجازه از این محفل جهت سفر بایران نخواهند بود. از کسانی که قصد سفر بایران را دارند تقاضا می شود که با محفل روحانی ملی برای احراز هدایت و راهنمایی های لازم مربوط به سفرشان تماس بگیرند. لطفا اسم و شماره کارت بهانی آنهایی را که بایران سفر خواهند کرد همراه با تاریخ تقریبی سفرشان بضمیمه ارسال فرمائید.

Bahá'í Canada deadlines

The following are the editorial deadlines for upcoming issues of *Bahá'í Canada*. Material such as news, photos, announcement, etc., received after the copy deadline for one issue automatically will be considered for the next issue.

Issue	Editorial Copy Deadline
July/August	June 1
September/October	August 1

Please note that all material submitted to *Bahá'í Canada* for publication is reviewed by the Bahá'í Canada Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly.

When you are planning to get married please do not delay in contacting the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will be held.

برنامه عقد ازدواج ؟

لطفاً در فرصت کافی قبل از تاریخ اجرای عقد ازدواج برای کسب راهنمایی و مساعدت لازم به نزدیک ترین محفل روحانی محلی مراجعه فرمائید.

Institute Boards

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Atlantic Provinces

PO Box 7073
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bahai.council@gmail.com
506 858 0959



ANNOUNCEMENTS

How to:

Purchase Bahá'í books

For Bahá'í books in English and Persian, contact:

Bahá'í Distribution Service
9-945 Middlefield Road
Toronto, ON, M1V 5E1
Order desk: (800) 465-3287
<www.bds-canada.com>

For Bahá'í books in French, contact the Service de distribution bahá'í - Québec (SDB-Q)

75 d'auteuil Street
Québec QC G1R 4C3
418-692-2402
<sdbq@videotron.ca>
<www.ca.bahai.org/files/catalogue.ENGLISH.pdf>

Pioneer internationally / become an International Youth Service volunteer

Contact the International Pioneer Department at 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8, phone 905-889-8168, fax 905-889-8184, email: <pioneer@cdnbnc.org> or <youthservices@cdnbnc.org>.

Contact by email

Email addresses for various departments at the Bahá'í National Centre in Thornhill, Ontario:

National Spiritual Assembly:
secretariat@cdnbnc.org

Treasury: treasury@cdnbnc.org
Bahá'í Canada Committee:
bcanada@cdnbnc.org

International Pioneer Department:
pioneer@cdnbnc.org
youthservices@cdnbnc.org

National & Unit Conventions Task Force: conventions@cdnbnc.org

National External Affairs Department:
externalaffairs@cdnbnc.org or
nsaxtn@interlog.com

Records Department:
records@cdnbnc.org

Homefront Youth Services:
secretariat@cdnbnc.org

If you are not sure to which department you should be directing your email, please use <secretariat@cdnbnc.org> and your email will be forwarded to the correct department.

Get international travel credentials

Request international credentials from the Bahá'í National Centre when planning to visit countries other than the United States. Contact the Records Department at <records@cdnbnc.org>. International travelling teachers are asked to contact the International Pioneer Department at <pioneer@cdnbnc.org>, or at 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8.

Change your address

Moving? Please notify your Spiritual Assembly or Group so it can notify the Records Department of the National Spiritual Assembly, or notify the Records Department directly, by sending a note containing your name, old address, new address and your Bahá'í ID number to: Records Department, Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; fax: 905-889-8184; email: <records@cdnbnc.org>.

Apply for pilgrimage

All pilgrimage requests (nine-day pilgrimage or three-day visit) are to be made directly between the individual pilgrims and the Bahá'í World Centre. Applications are in writing only; telephoned requests cannot be accepted. The Bahá'í Pilgrimage Web site <http://pilgrimage.bahai.org> offers information and an online pilgrimage application form. Those without access to the Internet may send their applications for pilgrimage by post or fax: Office of Pilgrimage, PO Box 155, 31-001, Haifa, Israel; fax: 011-972-4-835-8507.

Plan a Bahá'í wedding

When you are planning to get married please contact the Local Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the wedding will be held without delay. A Bahá'í wedding cannot take place without the authorization of the Local Assembly.

Submit items to Bahá'í Canada

Send news, photos, etc. to Bahá'í Canada, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8; email: <bcanada@cdnbnc.org>. Material received after the copy deadline for one issue automatically will be considered for the next issue. Editorial deadline: July/August 2012 - June 1, 2012.

Find "Bahá'í" on the Internet

The Bahá'í World: <www.bahai.org/>
Bahá'í Reference Library:
<http://reference.bahai.org/>
Bahá'í Topics: An Information Resource:
<http://info.bahai.org>
Bahá'í International Community's United Nations Statement Library:
<www.bic-un.bahai.org/>
Bahá'í World News Service:
<www.bahaiworldnews.org/>
Bahá'í Community of Canada:
<www.ca.bahai.org>
Canadian Bahá'í News: <bahainews.ca>
[<nouvellesbahaies.ca>]
Transforming Neighbourhoods
<www.transformingneighbourhoods.org>
Bahá'í Distribution Service:
<www.bds-canada.com>
Le Service de distribution bahá'í - Québec (For an English language catalogue on French books) <www.ca.bahai.org/files/catalogue.ENGLISH.pdf>
One Country: <http://onecountry.org>
Bahá'í Media Bank:
<http://media.bahai.org/>
Life of Bahá'u'lláh: <www.bahaullah.org>

Travel-teach and pioneer within Canada

"The institutions, in turn, will have to exercise sound judgement to ensure that such friends are strategically placed. Priority should be given to settling short-term and long-term pioneers in those clusters that are the focus of systematic attention . . ." Contact the National Spiritual Assembly <secretariat@cdnbnc.org> or 905-889-8168 for where to direct your service offer within Canada.

The Right of God - Huqúqu'lláh

"This ordinance is binding upon everyone, and by observing it one will be raised to honour inasmuch as it will serve to purify one's possessions and will impart blessing, and added prosperity. However, the people are as yet ignorant of its significance. They continually endeavour to amass riches by lawful or unlawful means in order to transmit them to their heirs, and this to what advantage, no one can tell. Say: In this day the true Heir is the Word of God, since the underlying purpose of inheritance is the preservation of the name and traces of men. It is indubitably clear that the passing of centuries and ages will obliterate these signs, while every word that hath streamed from the Pen of Glory in honour of a certain individual will last as long as the dominions of earth and heaven will endure."

(Huqúqu'lláh, The Right of God, Compilation, 2007, amended August 2009, #9)

IMPORTANT HUQÚQU'LLÁH PAYMENT INFORMATION

In response to guidance from the International Board of Trustees, the Board of Trustees of Huqúqu'lláh in Canada has set up a centralized system of receipting and recording of payments at the Treasury Department of the Bahá'í National Centre. Payments of the Right of God (Huqúqu'lláh) are not processed through individual Deputies or Representatives.

Payments should be sent directly to the **Huqúqu'lláh Treasury** at the Bahá'í National Centre, 7200 Leslie Street, Thornhill, ON, L3T 6L8. The Huqúqu'lláh Treasury will issue one receipt, which will serve both as an acknowledgment receipt and as an official tax receipt. It is up to the individual to determine whether or not she/he wishes to use the receipt when filing her/his income tax return. Cheques, bank drafts, bank and/or postal money orders should be made payable to "**Canadian Bahá'í Fund**" earmarked "**Huqúqu'lláh**" or "**Right of God**". Payments to the Right of God can also be made utilizing the 'www.bahaifunds.ca' Online Contribution System. The individual's Bahá'í identification number must be provided on all payments.

Payments should not be made through a local Spiritual Assembly.

Inquiries regarding the law of the Right of God (Huqúqu'lláh), including information about its spiritual significance as well as assistance with calculation, may be referred to your nearest Representative or Deputy Trustee.

Members of the Board of Trustees:

	☎	✉	اعضای هیأت امنای حقوق الله در کانادا:
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اطلاعیه مهم در خصوص نحوه پرداخت "حقوق الله"

با توجه به راهنمایی هیأت بین المللی امنای حقوق الله، هیأت امنای حقوق الله در کانادا برنامه مرکزی جدیدی را برای دریافت وجوه، صادر کردن رسید و نگهداری سوابق حقوق الله در اداره مالی دفتر محفل ملی کانادا برقرار کرده است. لذا امور مربوط به حقوق الله دیگر توسط افراد معاونین و یا نمایندگان امین حقوق الله اجرا نخواهد شد. وجوه مزبور مستقیماً باید به صندوق حقوق الله به آدرس زیر ارسال گردد:

Bahá'í National Centre Huqúqu'lláh Treasury, 7200 Leslie Street Thornhill ON L3T 6L8

خزانه دار هیأت امنای حقوق الله رسید وجوه دریافت شده را که در عین حال رسید مالیاتی نیز محسوب میگردد برای فرستنده ارسال خواهند داشت. تقدیم کنندگان حقوق الله میتوانند از این رسید ها در زمان تهیه اوراق مالیاتی استفاده نمایند. در روی چک، حواله بانکی یا پستی باید عبارت Canadian Bahá'í Fund - Huqúqu'lláh ذکر شود. شماره تسجیل بهائی نیز باید در هر پرداخت قید گردد. از چندی پیش امکان پرداخت حقوق الله از طریق سایت اینترنتی 'www.bahaifunds.ca' و با استفاده از کارتهای اعتباری نیز میسر شده است. وجوه تقدیمی برای حقوق الله به هیچ وجه نباید توسط محافل روحانی محلی ارسال شود. سوالات مربوط به حقوق الله، همچنین مطالب راجع به جنبه روحانی این فریضه و راهنمایی درباره نحوه محاسبه مبالغ حقوق الله را میتوان از معاونین و یا نمایندگان امین حقوق الله درخواست کرد.